

Dryden **Of Dramatick Poesie**

Edited by James T. Boulton

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DRYDEN  
Of Dramatick Poesie



DRYDEN  
*Of Dramatick Poesie*

AN ESSAY

WITH

*Sir Robert Howard's Preface to  
The Great Favourite*

AND

*Dryden's Defence of an Essay*

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY

JAMES T. BOULTON

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE,  
UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM



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## INTRODUCTION

Fungar vice cotis, acutum  
Reddere quae ferrum valet, exsors ipsa secandi.<sup>1</sup>

This Horatian motto appeared on the title-page of Dryden's *Of Dramatick Poesie, an Essay*. It announced in unmistakable terms what the audience of 1667-8 were to expect. Dryden's aim was to stimulate thought about issues which were practical as well as theoretical; to propose criteria for writing and judging plays which would be seen by the same people as read the *Essay*; and to accomplish this in ways that would both entertain and convince such readers. Despite many hundreds of pages of critical comment on the *Essay* the complexity of Dryden's persuasive tactics has not been sufficiently explored. It is true that Dryden, like T. S. Eliot in his criticism of Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights and in an essay like *Poetry and Drama*, was considering, together with the end of drama, the means by which the perfect play could be written—he was concerned to solve the problems confronting the practising dramatist: but he was also out to persuade readers educated in classical and renaissance criticism to adapt traditional formulae to a new situation and age, and to accept in theory a new kind of drama that was concurrently being exemplified in practice.

The circumstances in which the *Essay* were written were congenial to his purpose. Between June 1665 and December 1666 Dryden was out of London because of the plague; this period he spent at Charlton Park, near Malmesbury, the home of his father-in-law, the Earl of Berkshire. While there 'without the

<sup>1</sup> Horace, *Ars Poetica*, ll. 304-5: 'I'll play a whetstone's part, which makes steel sharp, but of itself cannot cut.'

help of Books, or advice of Friends'<sup>2</sup> he had leisure to think through problems which had arisen in collaborating with Sir Robert Howard on *The Indian Queen* (performed in January 1664) and in writing *The Rival Ladies* (acted later the same year). One issue which would come to mind is implicit in Pepys' remark on *The Indian Queen*: 'the play good, but spoiled with the ryme, which breaks the sense'.<sup>3</sup> This question of rhymed drama, argued in the *Essay*, was first discussed in the Preface to *The Rival Ladies*. It doubtless acquired new emphasis for Dryden by the publication of Thomas Sprat's *Observations on M. de Sorbier's Voyage into England* (1665) in which Sorbière's attack on the neglect of rhyme and the unities in English drama was parried. Except for his preference for blank verse over rhyme, Sprat's claims for the superiority of English drama would find Dryden a sympathetic reader.<sup>4</sup>

Whether he liked it or not, Dryden was thus drawn into an international controversy. The *Essay*, his most ambitiously constructed critical treatise, was undoubtedly written partly in response to this stimulus; it was written indeed to achieve a particular effect. Here he was not merely a young dramatist toying with ideas which concerned him professionally; he was committed to maintaining a critical position against an adversary. The matter was further complicated by the entry of his brother-in-law, Sir Robert Howard, into the literary quarrel. In his Preface to *Four New Plays* (1665) Howard came out against Dryden on the matter of rhyming plays; he censured classical and French drama in some respects, but also condemned tragicomedy. In the *Essay*, therefore, Dryden provided some supporting fire for Sprat's reply to Sorbière as well as an assault on the position occupied by Howard. The *Essay*, published late in

<sup>2</sup> See p. 35.

<sup>3</sup> *Diary*, 1 Feb. 1664.

<sup>4</sup> See George Williamson, 'The Occasion of *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*', *Modern Philology*, XLIV (1946-7), 1-9.

1667 (it was entered in the Stationers' Register on 7 August) or early 1668, was not the end of the dispute with Howard. In his clumsy way he tried to counter Dryden's arguments by his Preface to *The Great Favourite, or, the Duke of Lerma* in 1668; but Dryden managed the last word, in public at any rate, in his *Defence of an Essay* which he published (as the Preface to the second edition of his *Indian Emperour*) in the same year.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout this literary battle, then, Dryden was establishing his own views in opposition to those of an opponent. This is important. It does not turn the *Essay* into a piece of harsh polemic—far from it—but it does focus attention on Dryden's aim: to convince an audience of the rightness of certain views and later, in the severer *Defence*, to vindicate his own reputation by scoring off that of another man. Dryden's *Essay*, in this respect among others, differs sharply from T. S. Eliot's *Dialogue on Poetic Drama*.<sup>6</sup> Eliot's dialogue is a relaxed exchange of views between 'half a dozen men . . . sitting in a tavern after lunch, lingering over port and conversation at an hour when they should all be doing something else';<sup>7</sup> Dryden's is set against the symbolic background of a battle. If Eliot's speakers had something else to do one is at a loss to imagine what it could be, whereas Dryden's at least give the impression of being cultured men with a wide literary knowledge, an intimacy with current literary gossip, and roots in the Restoration world—a world where parsons timed their sermons by an hour-glass on the pulpit, men on a journey 'baited' (or paused) at an inn for refreshment, and where bidding

<sup>5</sup> Dryden sets out the chronology of his dispute with Howard at the end of the *Defence*. See p. 147.

<sup>6</sup> Included in his edition of Dryden's *Essay*, 1928.

<sup>7</sup> Op. cit., p. x. Contrast Dryden's description in the Dedication to *The Assignment* (1673): 'We have . . . our genial nights, where our discourse is neither too serious, nor too light, but always pleasant, and for the most part instructive . . . and the cups only such as will raise the conversation of the night, without disturbing the business of the morrow' (ed. W. G. Watson, *Of Dramatic Poesy, and Other Critical Essays*—henceforward 'Watson'—i (1962), 186).

at an auction ended when a piece of lighted candle burnt out.<sup>8</sup> In other words, by allusions of this kind which occur incidentally in the dialogue, Dryden kept his reader in touch with a world in which the views he was concerned to maintain were of immediate importance. Eliot's speakers, unlike Dryden's, do not assume that the questions they discuss are important to their contemporaries; because Dryden is convinced of the relevance of his subject-matter his dialogue is so much the less relaxed and more confident.

This is not to claim that the *Essay* realizes a satisfying dramatic situation with the lively exchanges of a Platonic dialogue, because it does not. It would indeed have been improved by an admixture, among the lengthy set speeches, of brief, sharp statements (which were well within Dryden's competence). The foregoing argument does, however, lend an extra significance to Dryden's choice of speakers. While they clearly have certain allegorical functions—Eugenius, for example, is the advocate for the Moderns, Lisideius (with the French borrowings in his vocabulary) is the francophile—the tradition (recently challenged but not discredited) that they represent particular individuals is completely in keeping with the rhetorical purpose of the *Essay* as a whole. To persuade his audience to accept certain views on matters of current interest, Dryden was well advised to model his interlocutors on men whose activities proved their concern in, and whose prominence gave added weight to, the conclusions reached. He tells us that three of the speakers were 'persons whom their Wit and Quality have made known to all the Town'.<sup>9</sup> Eugenius is normally identified with Charles Sackville, Lord Buckhurst (1638–1706) to whom the *Essay* is dedicated, and Lisideius with Sir Charles Sedley (1639?–1701), both of them members of the group of young courtiers nicknamed 'the merry gang' or (as Pope describes them in his *Epistle to*

<sup>8</sup> See pp. 79, 77, 40.

<sup>9</sup> See p. 36.

Augustus) 'The Mob of Gentlemen who wrote with Ease'.<sup>10</sup> They were ready to enjoy that 'Laughing, Quaffing and unthinking Time',<sup>11</sup> but they were also cultured men whose own verse would encourage them to prefer the poetry of their own time before that of any other age.<sup>12</sup> Their connexion with the theatre, moreover, guaranteed their concern with the subject of the *Essay*. Crites is almost certainly modelled in most respects on Howard who, though conceited and pompous, was well known as playwright and *entrepreneur* in the theatrical world. Neander is generally assumed to be Dryden himself, already the author of two plays and part-author of a third. Like Zimri in *Absalom and Achitophel*, in whom the type of 'the inconstant man' and the person of Buckingham were fused, the four speakers were both representative and particular figures. They were in fact admirably designed for Dryden's rhetorical purpose.

The topics discussed in the *Essay* were of keen interest to men like Buckhurst, Sedley, Howard, and Dryden. They were equally important to their contemporaries for whom these men acted as spokesmen, readers who (as Dryden remarks in the *Defence of the Epilogue*) refused to take anything 'from antiquity on trust' and were determined that 'poetry may not go backwards when all other arts and sciences are advancing'.<sup>13</sup> This determination grew out of their confidence in native literary achievement; a confidence which in its turn received its strongest fillip from the Restoration in 1660. Set against the battle in which the English fleet gained a notable victory over the Dutch (though the principal literary 'enemy' was the French nation), the *Essay* drew its strongest persuasive power from the appeal to national pride. The year 1660 had seen 'the restoration of our happiness'; poetry was 'lifting up its head, and already shaking off the rubbish.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. J. H. Wilson, *The Court Wits of the Restoration* (Princeton, 1948).

<sup>11</sup> Dryden, *Secular Masque from The Pilgrim* (1700), l. 40.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. p. 42.

<sup>13</sup> Watson, i, 169.

which lay so heavy on it'; the twenty years of the Commonwealth, given over to 'a barbarous race of men, Enemies of all good Learning', were past; and the court 'which is the best and surest Judge of writing' had been re-established in Whitehall.<sup>14</sup> One of the highest commendations for a poem was that (like Suckling's) it was 'courtly writ' and expressed 'the Conversation of a Gentleman'.<sup>15</sup> Dryden was manifestly wrong in his strictures on the Puritans, but he was alert to the persuasive appeal carried in the tone and values of the rejuvenated aristocratic culture.<sup>16</sup> The *Essay's* dedicatory epistle opens with this appeal. Assuming the aristocratic indifference of a Rochester, Dryden refers to his accidental discovery of 'this rude and indigested' piece of writing. With the wit of a hero in Restoration comedy (like Dorimant in Etherege's *Man of Mode*) he passes off the *Essay* as a task that 'serv'd as an amusement to [him] in the Country' when he was deprived of town society, and longing for the theatre 'with the same delight with which men think upon their absent Mistresses'; and, later, the consequence of the naval victory most feared by the four friends in the dialogue is the dull poems which would be written on it.<sup>17</sup> When eventually they part, they are once more in the fashionable quarter of the city, 'the Piazza' in Covent Garden, and—with some Restoration innuendo—Dryden remarks that Eugenius and Lisideius go off 'to some pleasant appointment they had made'.

The tone, characters, and setting, then, are designed to appeal forcibly to the cultivated Restoration reader. So too is the style. It is the style of a poet who recognized (with Eliot) that the first requirements of good verse are the essential features of excellence in prose: logic, clarity, fluency, and vitality. Dryden himself expresses much the same idea negatively in the *Defence*: 'they

<sup>14</sup> See pp. 96, 30.

<sup>15</sup> p. 42.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. his scorn for the taste of the 'multitude' and his reliance on that of 'the Noblesse', p. 107-8.

<sup>17</sup> p. 37.

cannot be good Poets who are not accustomed to argue well.<sup>18</sup> To place one of his paragraphs against one from Howard's Preface is to see his qualities illuminated by contrast. Howard's prose is lumbering, tortuous, obscure, and illogical; Dryden's agile mind evolves an argument in which the separate points raised by individual speakers are used cumulatively to develop a considered and comprehensive theory.

He is particularly aware of the value of imaginative detail. In the Dedication, for example, he is defending 'the way of writing Plays in Verse'; this theme is courteously associated with the achievements of Buckhurst, himself a dramatist, but it is the imagery that one notices vitalizing the theme. The main image is that of battle, of defence and attack. Buckhurst's own example as a dramatist is a 'defence', but he has 'laid down Arms' when he could have taken 'command' and given the lead to other writers; the *Essay* might stir him to action as Achilles was stimulated into 'Martial Warmth' by 'the fight of the Greeks and Trojans before the Fleet'. Dryden himself, in this 'War of Opinions', does not 'hope to overcome, but only to yield on more honourable terms'. And when the *Essay* itself opens, the scene is set on 'that memorable day . . . when our Navy ingag'd the Dutch'. In other words, the Dedication is not only a piece of courteous introduction; it also prepares imaginatively for the tone in which the main work opens and is sustained. Defence and attack are the means by which the discussion is forwarded; thesis and antithesis were the devices which 'the best of the Ancients' used and which 'the modest Inquisitions of the Royal Society' imitated in the search for truth.<sup>19</sup> But the search had to be invigorating; tedium was as obnoxious to the Restoration wit as 'bad company',<sup>20</sup> and it was avoided by lively writing in constant touch with the facts of human existence. By imagery drawn from nature or from science, from horse-racing or

<sup>18</sup> p. 135.<sup>19</sup> p. 138.<sup>20</sup> p. 79.

medicine, chess or masonry,<sup>21</sup> Dryden keeps his reader's mind actively delighted and aware of the world of men from which the dramatist draws his material. He does not (like Shelley for example) speak of poetry as 'a sword of lightning ever unsheathed', of the effect of poetry as being to spread 'its own figured curtain or withdraw life's dark veil from before the scenes of things', or of the poet as a 'nightingale'.<sup>22</sup> On the contrary. Eugenius claims that to read some of Cleveland's poems is like crunching a hard nut which nearly breaks the teeth and offers no kernel as a reward; Lisideius argues that the writer of tragi-comedy is as foolish as a doctor who 'having prescribed a Purge . . . immediately orders you to take restringents'; and Neander remarks that post-Shakespearian dramatists are like heirs to an estate which is ruined before they inherit it.<sup>23</sup> At every turn the imagery reminds us that the drama is an integral part of human society, as much a part of life as physical behaviour or economic realities.

Literary facts are equally kept in view. One of the principal advances in the history of criticism made by the *Essay* is related to this: its constant reference to particular writers and specific works, together with its analytic examination of one play (Jonson's *Silent Woman*) as a test-case. Dryden is the first exponent (especially in the 'Examen') of what is now called 'practical criticism', a further piece of evidence of the high degree of involvement he felt to exist between writer, reader, and society. Practical criticism flourishes in an age which takes the justification of literature for granted; which moves on from theoretical claims for literature as a whole, or for certain literary kinds, to the evaluation of a particular writer's solution of specific stylistic or other problems and the practical lessons that can be learned from

<sup>21</sup> pp. 39, 78, 47, 66, 96, 114.

<sup>22</sup> *Defence of Poetry*, ed. H. A. Needham, n.d., pp. 84, 105, 77.

<sup>23</sup> pp. 60, 66, 107.

his example. Such an age was Dryden's which, after the Elizabethan-Jacobean period of creative activity, followed (in his eyes) by the artistic sterility of the Commonwealth, required a stock-taking rather than fresh and fundamental theorizing. Dryden, recognizing that the new social ethos demanded a corresponding literary development (in part to consolidate and justify the ethos), was concerned to examine the achievements of the past, in Europe as well as in England, in order to determine what lessons could be learned for his own time. To this extent Dryden honestly described the *Essay* as 'for the most part borrowed from the observations of others'.<sup>24</sup> There is much that was traditional in his theory. He owed a great debt to Corneille as theorist and 'practical critic'. But while traditional and borrowed ideas are embedded in the *Essay* they do not add up to the sum of its achievement. Dryden's speakers assume with Aristotle that the object of art is 'the imitation of nature'; what they argue about is the *means* by which this imitation is best secured in the Restoration period. This is made clear in the *Defence* where Dryden accuses Howard of mistaking means for ends:

having laid down, that Nature is to be imitated, and that Proposition proving the next, that then there are means which conduce to the imitating of Nature, I dare proceed no farther positively: but have only laid down some opinions of the Ancients and Moderns, and of my own, as means which they used, and which I thought probable for the attaining of that end.<sup>25</sup>

Thus the discussion of (among other means) the unities, rhyme, 'humours', or the extent of action which can relevantly be shown on the stage, must be regarded as contributing to an answer to the general question outlined above: what means can best 'conduce to the imitating of nature' under the given literary

<sup>24</sup> p. 127.

<sup>25</sup> pp. 137-8.

conditions of the Restoration? To reach an answer he looks back to earlier English dramatists; he looks to contemporary French writers, and the English theatre of his own day; and from this wealth of exemplary material his speakers argue their respective cases.

As the *Essay* proceeds a concept of drama gradually emerges which, while not new in its essentials, was sufficiently novel to require some reorientation in the thinking of Dryden's contemporaries. That it was novel at all underlines the need for the persuasive techniques I have been emphasizing.

In the first main exchange, when Eugenius replies to Crites' case for the 'justness of imitation' achieved by the ancient writers, he does not try very vigorously to refute this claim: rather he stresses the failure of the ancients and the success of the moderns in securing 'delight' and liveliness of response. Modern writers are not content with 'a dull imitation' of their predecessors; they draw from 'the life'.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, when Neander (in his vindication of national honour) replies to Lisideius (the champion of the French drama) he admits that the French are superior in contriving regular plots, but asserts that this is not necessarily the best means of achieving liveliness. 'Those beauties of the French poesie . . . are indeed the Beauties of a Statue, but not of a Man.'<sup>27</sup> Liveliness, he argues, can be produced in irregular plays, as Shakespeare's example proves; English writers can achieve it in regularly formed drama, as Jonson demonstrates particularly in *The Silent Woman*. And when this play is analysed Neander consistently prefers liveliness and delight to justness of imitation and instruction. Jonson, he insists, not only observes the unities but also creates numerous vital characters, achieves inevitability in the working-out of his plot, and exploits the dramatic value of suspense. Dryden's 'practical criticism' is flawed on a number of counts, not least by his misrepresentation of the evidence and

<sup>26</sup> p. 51.

<sup>27</sup> p. 75.

his patriotic fervour; but it is a key passage in the *Essay* as well as, historically, the first English example of sustained comparative criticism. Finally, in the discussion of rhymed plays, where Crites argues for 'justness of imitation' and prefers blank verse because it is closer to normal speech, Neander again concentrates on liveliness of imitation. He maintains that, by careful selection and placing of language, rhyme can be made natural *within a play*; rhyme is more appropriate in serious plays where passions are heightened; and in repartee where art is much in evidence, rhyme adds 'the last perfection'. Once again the criterion is not naturalism but the liveliness of the dramatic experience. Indeed, despite the attention to different aspects of drama by the various speakers, Dryden appears consistently to be urging one central concept: that the dramatist imitates human nature in order to delight and thereby to instruct (which was the traditional view), but that excellence of drama is to be measured by the liveliness of the representation and the keen delight experienced by the audience.

The same argument is advanced in the *Defence*; it turns once more on the difference between art and actuality which is implicit in the *Essay*. Howard confuses actuality with its representation in drama, and applies the term 'nature' (or 'natural') to both. He claims, for example, that because the unities depend on contrivance—action taking place in a single place in a single day—they are conducive to unnaturalness. Dryden's retort is based on the conviction that drama is the work of a writer imitating (not reproducing) human actions; it does not set out to be an exact copy of empirical reality, and so Howard, debating whether rhyme reproduces the *ex tempore* speech of human beings, is arguing from a false premise. Reality is heightened and to some extent changed as it passes into art (otherwise the response to reality and art would be identical); therefore the criterion for judging excellence is not the exactness of the imitation but the degree of achieved pleasure appropriate to the art-form:

delight is the chief, if not the only end of Poesie; instruction can be admitted but in the second place, for Poesie only instructs as it delights. 'Tis true that to imitate well is a Poets work; but to affect the Soul, and excite the Passions, and above all to move admiration (which is the delight of serious Plays) a bare imitation will not serve.<sup>28</sup>

Both the *Essay* and the *Defence* rest on this cardinal belief; it is this that gives them a dialectical wholeness.

Dryden, then, served his contemporaries well. But, in 1928, Eliot claimed that 'the questions he discussed are not out of date'.<sup>29</sup> Eliot in fact thought that many of the issues Dryden had raised were of permanent value, and these concerned not only the means but also the end of drama. Of permanent interest among the general questions provoked by the *Essay* are: what is the 'delight' drama can give? what is the 'instruction' and how is it related to 'delight'? what is the relation between art and empirical reality? how important are dramatic conventions? To these questions Dryden does not give final answers, but it is part of his significance as a critic that he compels the modern reader to explore them.

To glance briefly at the kind of thinking Dryden provokes on one of these questions—the nature of 'instruction'—we must return to the focal point of the *Essay*, the definition of a play: { 'A just and lively Image of Humane Nature, representing its Passions and Humours, and the Changes of Fortune to which it is subject; for the Delight and Instruction of Mankind.'<sup>30</sup> About Dryden's insistence on liveliness of imitation I have said enough already. The 'Changes of Fortune' are those circumstances to which characters are subjected in order that their distinctive personalities and passions shall be revealed. Lear's response to the changed circumstances following his division of the kingdom is a case in point. The revelation of his personality and temperament is, in terms of the play, lifelike; it is urgent and compelling, and

<sup>28</sup> p. 128.<sup>29</sup> Op. cit., p. xxvi.<sup>30</sup> p. 43.

therefore provides an appropriate dramatic pleasure; and this in turn is 'instructive', in that our awareness of human grandeur and degradation, courage and capacity for moral growth is extended. The dramatic material out of which this 'instruction' comes is familiar to us in the sense that we have had other experience of human reaction to frustration and bitter disillusion; at the same time it is unfamiliar in that we have perhaps never seen a titanic figure responding to the galling disappointment of hopes centred in people related to him through blood and duty, and certainly never in the particular situation created by Shakespeare in *Lear*. In varying degrees the dramatist—whether Shakespeare or Jonson, Eliot or O'Neill—builds on but extends and deepens the experience we have from 'real life' so that we are led to new insights and fresh psychological and moral discoveries. Such is one kind of instructive pleasure consistent with Dryden's general approach. He also allows for the pleasure—which intensifies and enriches the foregoing—that is aesthetic rather than moral or psychological: the kind which results from witnessing the ordered working-out of a single theme in a dramatic action marked by variety both of characters and situation. This kind of pleasure Dryden clearly found in Jonson's *Silent Woman*.

Infallibility cannot be required of even a major critic, but he can be expected to provoke general speculation proper for any age as well as meeting the particular needs of his own time. Dryden performs both these functions, as Eliot suggests in a passage from *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*:

From time to time, every hundred years or so, it is desirable that some critic shall appear to review the past of our literature, and set the poets and the poems in a new order. This task is not one of revolution but of readjustment. What we observe is partly the same scene, but in a different and more distant perspective; there are new and strange objects in the foreground, to be drawn accurately in proportion to the more familiar

ones which now approach the horizon, where all but the most eminent become invisible to the naked eye. The exhaustive critic, armed with a powerful glass, will be able to sweep the distance and gain an acquaintance with minute objects in the landscape with which to compare minute objects close at hand; he will be able to gauge nicely the position and proportion of the objects surrounding us, in the whole of the vast panorama. This metaphorical fancy only represents the ideal; but Dryden, Johnson and Arnold have each performed the task as well as human frailty will allow.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *Op. cit.* (1933), pp. 108-9.

## DRYDEN'S LIFE

- 1631 John Dryden born at Aldwinkle All Saints, Northamptonshire, on 9 August.
- 164? Elected a King's Scholar at Westminster School.
- 1650-4 Trinity College, Cambridge; B.A., January 1654. 'Too roving and active . . . to confine himself to a college life', says a contemporary, Dryden 'went to London into gayer company, and set up for a poet.'
- 1659 *Heroique Stanza's* in memory of Cromwell.
- 1660 *Astraea Redux. A Poem On the Happy Restoration & Return Of His Sacred Majesty Charles the Second.*
- 1662 Admitted a Fellow of the Royal Society.
- 1663 Production of Dryden's first play, *The Wild Gallant: A Comedy* (pub. 1669).  
Marriage to Lady Elizabeth Howard, daughter of the Earl of Berkshire.
- 1664 *The Rival Ladies, a Tragi-Comedy* published with a critical preface defending the use of rhyme; Sir Robert Howard replied to Dryden in his Preface to *Four New Plays* (1665).
- 1665 *The Indian Emperour* (pub. 1667), Dryden's first heroic play. The Plague: London theatres closed May 1665-December 1666.
- 1667 *The Tempest*, Dryden's first adaptation of Shakespeare, written in collaboration with Davenant.  
Contract with the King's Theatre to furnish three plays a year.
- 1668 *Of Dramatick Poesie, An Essay*, Dryden's first substantial piece of literary criticism (revised 1684).

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Sir Robert Howard, in his Preface to *The Great Favourite, or, The Duke of Lerma* (1668), replied to Dryden's *Essay*. Dryden, in his turn, prefixed his *Defence of an Essay of Dramatique Poesie* to the second edition of *The Indian Emperour*, which appeared a few weeks later, also in 1668.

Appointed Poet Laureate in succession to Sir William Davenant.

1669 *Tyrannick Love . . . A Tragedy* (pub. 1670).

1670 *The Conquest of Granada*, in two parts; Dryden's most ambitious heroic play (pub. 1672).

1672 *Marriage A-la-Mode*, the best of Dryden's comedies (pub. 1673).

1675 *Aureng-Zebe: A Tragedy* (pub. 1676).

1677 *The State of Innocence . . . An Opera . . . in Heroique Verse* based on *Paradise Lost*. It was not acted.

*All for Love: or, The World Well Lost*, adapted from Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and the richest of Dryden's plays (pub. 1678).

1678 *Mac Flecknoe*, a mock-heroic poem in ridicule of Thomas Shadwell and implicitly in defence of true 'wit'. Printed without authority, 1682.

1680 *Ovid's Epistles, Translated* (preface and two epistles by Dryden).

*The Spanish Fryar* (pub. 1681).

1681 *Absalom and Achitophel. A Poem*.

1682 *The Medall. A Satyre against Sedition* and particularly against Shaftesbury (March).

*The Second Part of Absalom and Achitophel*, mainly by Nahum Tate but with Dryden's additions and revisions (November).

*Religio Laici or A Laymans Faith. A Poem* defending the Anglican position in theology.

- 1683 'Life of Plutarch' prefixed to *Plutarch's Lives, Translated*.
- 1684 *Miscellany Poems*, the first part of Tonson's miscellany to which Dryden contributed much original verse and translation.
- 1685 *Sylvæ: or, The Second Part of Miscellany Poems* (preface and translations from Virgil, Lucretius, and Theocritus, by Dryden).  
*Threnodia Augustalis: A Funeral-Pindarique Poem* in memory of Charles II (died 6 February).
- 1686 Dryden received into the Roman Church.
- 1687 *The Hind and the Panther*, a defence of Roman Catholic theology and Dryden's longest original poem.  
*A Song for St. Cecilia's Day* (November), the first of Dryden's two odes for the annual celebration of this feast.
- 1688 *Britannia Rediviva: A Poem on the Birth of the Prince* (the 'Old Pretender', born 10 June).  
Abdication of James II.
- 1689 Succession of William and Mary. Dryden loses his offices of Poet Laureate and Historiographer Royal to the Whig Shadwell.
- 1690 *Don Sebastian . . . A Tragedy. Amphitryon . . . A Comedy*.
- 1691 *King Arthur . . . A Dramatick Opera*.
- 1692 *Cleomenes, The Spartan Heroe. A Tragedy*.
- 1693 *The Satires of Juvenal and Persius*, mainly translated by Dryden, with a long critical 'Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire'.  
*Examen Poeticum: Being the Third Part of Miscellany Poems* (preface and translations from Ovid and Homer by Dryden).
- 1694 *The Annual Miscellany* (the fourth miscellany volume, with two pieces by Dryden).  
*Love Triumphant: A Tragi-Comedy*, Dryden's last play.

- 1695 'A Parallel betwixt Painting and Poetry' prefixed to a translation of Du Fresnoy's *De Arte Graphica*.
- 1697 *The Works of Virgil*, translated by Dryden over a period of three years, and his most sustained single work.  
*Alexander's Feast, or The Power of Musique. An Ode, In Honour of St. Cecilia's Day.*
- 1700 *Fables Ancient and Modern* translated from Chaucer, Boccaccio, Homer, and Ovid; Dryden's most varied collection of verse, with a preface important for its critical discussion of Chaucer.  
*The Secular Masque*, an after-piece for Vanbrugh's version of Fletcher's *Pilgrim*.
- Dryden dies, 1 May; buried in Westminster Abbey, 13 May.

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## SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY.

### I EDITIONS OF DRYDEN'S ESSAY:

D. Nichol Smith (1900): a modernized text from the 1684 edition (with Howard's Preface to *The Great Favourite* and Dryden's *Defence*, unannotated, as appendices).

W. P. Ker (1900): a modernized text from the 1668 edition occasionally conflated with the 1684 edition without acknowledgement.

T. S. Eliot (1928): a reliable edition of the 1668 text (unannotated).

D. D. Arundell (Cambridge, 1929): a modernized text from the 1668 edition, in a valuable compilation of all the publications in the Dryden-Howard controversy (*Dryden and Howard, 1664-68*).

G. Watson (1962): as for Ker above.

### II CRITICISM:

S. Johnson, *Life of Dryden* (1779).

T. S. Eliot, *Homage to John Dryden* (1924) and *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933).

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D. Nichol Smith, *Dryden* (Cambridge, 1950).

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## NOTE ON THE TEXT

THE copy-text for the *Essay* (the only critical work Dryden revised) is that of the second edition (1684) which contained numerous changes made by the author subsequent to the first (1668). All substantive changes are recorded in the textual apparatus. Some few alterations were made in the third edition (1693); where these correct errors in the second or clarify Dryden's meaning, they have been adopted and are included in the textual apparatus.

In the apparatus the words inside the bracket refer to the text printed; those following record the 1668 version except where stated to the contrary.

Editorial emendations have been kept to a minimum: their object has been to provide a thoroughly reliable text which is intelligible to the modern reader. The italicizing of titles of printed works in Dryden's original text is haphazard and sometimes misleading; it has been normalized and all titles now appear in italics. Spelling, capitalization, and punctuation remain unaltered except for obvious printer's errors or where seventeenth-century usage would perplex a modern reader; at such points minor changes have been made silently.

The texts for Howard's Preface and Dryden's *Defence* present no problems. They were never revised and therefore are printed from the original editions.

Explanatory notes for all three texts will be found at the end of the book.

The place of publication of all books to which reference is made is London unless otherwise stated.

All quotations from Dryden's other prose criticism are taken from the edition of his critical essays by George Watson (Everyman's Library, 1962).

OF  
Dramatick Poefie,  
AN  
ESSAY.

---

By JOHN DRYDEN,  
Servant to His MAJESTY.

---

—*Fungat vice cotis, acutum  
Reddere quæ ferrum valet, exors ipsa secandi.*

Horat. De Arte Poet.

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L O N D O N,

Printed for Henry Herringman, at the Sign of the *Anchor* on  
the Lower-Walk of the *New-Exchange*. 1684

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE,  
CHARLES LORD BUCKHURST.

MY LORD,

As I was lately reviewing my loose Papers, amongst the rest I found this Essay, the writing of which in this rude and indigested manner wherein your Lordship now sees it, serv'd as an amusement to me in the Country, when the violence of the last Plague had driven me from the Town. 5  
Seeing then our Theaters shut up, I was engag'd in these kind of thoughts with the same delight with which men think upon their absent Mistresses: I confess I find many things in this Discourse which I do not now approve; my Judgment being not a little alter'd since the writing of it, 10  
but whether for the better or the worse I know not: Neither indeed is it much material in an Essay, where all I have said is problematical. For the way of writing Plays in Verse, which I have seem'd to favour, I have since that time laid the practice of it aside, till I have more leisure, because I find 15  
it troublesome and slow. But I am no way alter'd from my opinion of it, at least with any reasons which have oppos'd it. For your Lordship may easily observe that none are very violent against it, but those who either have not attempted it, or who have succeeded ill in their attempt. 'Tis enough 20  
for me to have your Lordships example for my excuse in that little which I have done in it; and I am sure my Adver-

Buckhurst] Charles Earl of Dorset and Middlesex, Lord Chamberlain of their Majesties Household, Knight of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, &c. 1693      10 being . . . little] *being a little*

saries can bring no such Arguments against Verse, as those  
 with which the fourth Act of *Pompey* will furnish me in its  
 25 defence. Yet, my Lord, you must suffer me a little to com-  
 plain of you, that you too soon withdraw from us a con-  
 tentment, of which we expected the continuance, because  
 you gave it us so early. 'Tis a revolt without occasion from  
 your Party, where your Merits had already rais'd you to the  
 30 highest Commands, and where you have not the excuse of  
 other Men that you have been ill us'd, and therefore laid  
 down Arms. I know no other Quarrel you can have to  
 Verse, than that which *Spurina* had to his Beauty, when he  
 tore and mangled the Features of his Face, only because they  
 35 pleas'd too well the sight. It was an Honour which seem'd  
 to wait for you, to lead out a new Colony of Writers from  
 the Mother Nation: and upon the first spreading of your  
 Ensigns, there had been many in a readiness to have follow'd  
 so fortunate a Leader; if not all, yet the better part of Poets.

40 Pars, indocili melior grege; mollis & expes  
 Inominata perprimat cubilia.

I am almost of opinion, that we should force you to  
 accept of the Command, as sometimes the *Prætorian* Bands  
 have compell'd their Captains to receive the Empire. The  
 45 Court, which is the best and surest Judge of writing, has  
 generally allow'd of Verse; and in the Town it has found  
 Favourers of Wit and Quality. As for your own particular,  
 My Lord, you have yet Youth, and time enough to give  
 part of them to the divertisement of the Publick, before you  
 50 enter into the serious and more unpleasant business of the  
 World. That which the French Poet said of the Temple of

23 as . . . in] as the fourth Act of *Pompey* will furnish me with, in 35  
 the sight.] the lookers on. 39 Poets.] Writers. 49 them] it

Love, may be as well apply'd to the Temple of the Muses.  
The words, as near as I can remember them, were these:

Le jeune homme, à mauvaise grace,  
N'ayant pas adoré dans le Temple d'Amour: 55  
Il faut qu'il entre, & pour le sage  
Si ce n'est pas son vray séjour  
C'est un giste sur son passage.

I leave the words to work their effect upon your Lordship in their own Language, because no other can so well 60  
express the nobleness of the thought; and wish you may be soon call'd to bear a part in the Affairs of the Nation, where I know the World expects you, and wonders why you have been so long forgotten; there being no Person amongst our 65  
young Nobility, on whom the eyes of all men are so much bent. But in the mean time your Lordship may imitate the course of Nature, who gives us the Flower before the Fruit: that I may speak to you in the Language of the Muses, which I have taken from an excellent Poem to the King.

As Nature, when she Fruit designs, thinks fit 70  
By beauteous blossoms to proceed to it;  
And while she does accomplish all the Spring,  
Birds to her secret Operations sing.

I confess I have no greater reason, in addressing this Essay to your Lordship, than that it might awaken in you 75  
the desire of writing something, in whatever kind it be, which might be an Honour to our Age and Country. And me thinks it might have the same effect on you, which *Homer* tells us the fight of the *Greeks* and *Trojans* before the Fleet, had on the Spirit of *Achilles*, who though he had 80

<sup>54</sup> Le . . . à] La jeunesse a  
<sup>78</sup> on] upon

<sup>57</sup> ce n'est pas son] ce nest son

resolv'd not to ingage, yet found a Martial Warmth to steal  
 upon him, at the sight of Blows, the sound of Trumpets, and  
 the cries of fighting Men. For my own part, if, in treating  
 of this subject, I sometimes dissent from the Opinion of  
 85 better Wits, I declare it is not so much to combat their  
 Opinions, as to defend my own, which were first made  
 publick. Sometimes, like a Scholar in a Fencing-School,  
 I put forth my self, and shew my own ill play, on purpose  
 to be better taught. Sometimes I stand desperately to my  
 90 Arms, like the Foot when deserted by their Horse, not in  
 hope to overcome, but only to yield on more honourable  
 terms. And yet, My Lord, this War of Opinions, you well  
 know, has fallen out among the Writers of all Ages, and  
 sometimes betwixt Friends. Only it has been prosecuted by  
 95 some, like Pedants, with violence of words, and manag'd  
 by others like Gentlemen, with Candour and Civility.  
 Even Tully had a Controversie with his dear *Atticus*; and in  
 one of his Dialogues makes him sustain the part of an  
 Enemy in Philosophy, who in his Letters is his Confident  
 100 of State, and made privy to the most weighty Affairs of the  
 Roman Senate. And the same respect which was paid by  
 Tully to *Atticus*, we find return'd to him afterwards by  
*Cæsar* on a like occasion, who answering his Book in praise  
 of *Cato*, made it not so much his business to condemn *Cato*,  
 105 as to praise *Cicero*.

But that I may decline some part of the Encounter with  
 my Adversaries, whom I am neither willing to combate,  
 nor well able to resist; I will give your Lordship the Relation  
 of a Dispute betwixt some of our Wits on the same subject,

105 *Cicero*. [new para.] But] *Cicero*. But  
 subject,] *Wits upon this subject*,

in which they did not only speak of Plays in Verse, but 110  
 mingled, in the freedom of Discourse, some things of the  
 Ancient, many of the Modern ways of Writing; comparing  
 those with these, and the Wits of our Nation with those of  
 others: 'tis true, they differ'd in their Opinions, as 'tis prob- 115  
 able they would: neither do I take upon me to reconcile,  
 but to relate them: and that as *Tacitus* professes of himself,  
*Sine studio partium aut irâ*: without Passion or Interest;  
 leaving your Lordship to decide it in favour of which part  
 you shall judge most reasonable, and withal, to pardon the  
 many Errours of, 120

Your Lordships

Most obedient humble Servant,

JOHN DREYDEN.

123 DREYDEN.] DRYDEN.

## TO THE READER

*The drift of the ensuing Discourse was chiefly to vindicate the Honour of our English Writers, from the censure of those who unjustly prefer the French before them. This I intimate, lest any should think me so exceeding vain, as to teach others an Art which they understand much better than my self. But if this incorrect Essay, written in the Country without the help of Books, or advice of Friends, should find any acceptance in the World, I promise to my self a better success of the Second Part, wherein I shall more fully treat of the Virtues and Faults of the English Poets, who have written either in this, the Epique, or the Lyrique way.*

## AN ESSAY OF DRAMATICK POESIE

It was that memorable day, in the first Summer of the late War, when our Navy ingag'd the Dutch: A day wherein the two most mighty and best appointed Fleets which any Age had ever seen, disputed the command of the greater half of the Globe, the commerce of Nations, and the riches of the Universe. While these vast floating Bodies, on either side, mov'd against each other in parallel Lines, and our Countrymen, under the happy Conduct of his Royal Highness, went breaking, by little and little, into the Line of the Enemies, the noise of the Cannon from both Navies reach'd our Ears about the City; so that all Men, being alarm'd

3 lest] least      8 wherein . . . way.] wherein the Virtues and Faults of the English Poets, who have written either in this, the Epique, or the Lyrique way, will be more fully treated of, and their several styles im- partially imitated.

with it, and in a dreadful suspense of the event, which they knew was then deciding, every one went following the sound as his fancy led him; and leaving the Town almost  
 15 empty, some took towards the Park, some cross the River, others down it; all seeking the noise in the depth of silence.

Amongst the rest, it was the fortune of *Eugenius*, *Crites*, *Lisideius* and *Neander*, to be in company together: three of them persons whom their Wit and Quality have made  
 20 known to all the Town: and whom I have chose to hide under these borrowed names, that they may not suffer by so ill a relation as I am going to make of their discourse.

Taking then a Barge which a Servant of *Lisideius* had provided for them, they made haste to shoot the Bridge, and  
 25 left behind them that great fall of waters which hindred them from hearing what they desired: after which, having disingag'd themselves from many Vessels which rode at Anchor in the *Thames*, and almost blockt up the passage towards *Greenwich*, they order'd the Watermen to let fall  
 30 their Oares more gently; and then every one favouring his own curiosity with a strict silence, it was not long ere they perceiv'd the Air to break about them like the noise of distant Thunder, or of Swallows in a Chimney: those little undulations of sound, though almost vanishing before they  
 35 reach'd them, yet still seeming to retain somewhat of their first horror which they had betwixt the Fleets: after they had attentively listned till such time as the sound by little and little went from them; *Eugenius* lifting up his head, and taking notice of it, was the first who congratulated to the  
 40 rest that happy Omen of our Nations Victory: adding, that we had but this to desire in confirmation of it, that we might hear no more of that noise which was now leaving

the English Coast. When the rest had concur'd in the same opinion, *Crites*, a person of a sharp judgment, and somewhat too delicate a taste in Wit, which the world have mistaken in him for ill nature, said, smiling to us, that if the concernment of this battel had not been so exceeding great, he could scarce have wish'd the Victory at the price he knew he must pay for it, in being subject to the reading and hearing of so many ill verses as he was sure would be made on that Subject. Adding, that no Argument could scape some of those eternal Rhimers, who watch a Battel with more diligence than the Ravens and birds of Prey; and the worst of them surest to be first in upon the quarry, while the better able, either out of modesty writ not at all, or set that due value upon their Poems, as to let them be often desired and long expected! There are some of those impertinent people of whom you speak, answer'd *Lisideius*, who to my knowledge are already so provided, either way, that they can produce not only a Panegirick upon the Victory, but, if need be, a Funeral Elegy on the Duke: wherein after they have crown'd his valour with many Lawrels, they will at last deplore the odds under which he fell, concluding that his courage deserv'd a better destiny. All the company smil'd at the conceit of *Lisideius*; but *Crites*, more eager than before, began to make particular exceptions against some Writers, and said the publick Magistrate ought to send betimes to forbid them; and that it concern'd the peace and quiet of all honest people, that ill Poets should be as well silenc'd as seditious Preachers. In my opinion, replied *Eugenius*, you pursue your point too far;

49 knew he must] knew must 50 made . . . Adding,]  
made upon it; adding, 57 desired] call'd for 58 people  
. . . speak,] people you speak of, 61 on . . . after] upon the  
Duke: and after 63 Lawrels, . . . at] Lawrels, at

for as to my own particular, I am so great a lover of Poesie,  
 that I could wish them all rewarded who attempt but to  
 do well, at least I would not have them worse us'd than one  
 75 of their brethren was by *Sylla* the Dictator: *Quem in concione*  
*vidimus* (says *Tully*) *cum ei libellum malus poeta de populo*  
*subjecisset, quod epigramma in eum fecisset tantummodo alternis*  
*versibus longiusculis, statim ex iis rebus quas tunc vendebat jubere*  
*ei præmium tribui, sub ea conditione ne quid postea scriberet.* I  
 80 could wish with all my heart, replied *Crites*; that many  
 whom we know were as bountifully thank'd upon the same  
 condition, that they would never trouble us again. For  
 amongst others, I have a mortal apprehension of two Poets,  
 whom this victory with the help of both her wings will  
 85 never be able to escape; 'tis easie to guess whom you intend,  
 said *Lisideius*; and without naming them, I ask you if one  
 of them does not perpetually pay us with clenches upon  
 words and a certain clownish kind of raillery? if now and  
 then he does not offer at a *Catacresis* or *Clevelandism*,  
 90 wresting and torturing a word into another meaning: In  
 fine, if he be not one of those whom the French would call  
*un mauvais buffon*; one who is so much a well-willer to the  
*Satire*, that he intends at least, to spare no man; and though  
 he cannot strike a blow to hurt any, yet he ought to be  
 95 punish'd for the malice of the action; as our *Witches* are  
 justly hang'd because they think themselves to be such: and  
 suffer deservedly for believing they did mischief, because  
 they meant it. You have described him, said *Crites*, so  
 exactly, that I am affraid to come after you with my other  
 100 extremity of Poetry: He is one of those who having

74 us'd . . . *Quem*] us'd then *Sylla* the Dictator did one of their brethren  
 heretofore: *Quem* 76 (says *Tully*)] (says *Tully* speaking of him)  
 92 who] that 93 he . . . no] he spares no 94 yet he  
 ought] yet ought 96 themselves . . and] themselves so; and

had some advantage of education and converse, knows better than the other what a Poet should be, but puts it into practice more unluckily than any man; his stile and matter are every where alike; he is the most calm, peaceable Writer you ever read: he never disquiets your passions with the least concernment, but still leaves you in as even a temper as he found you; he is a very Leveller in Poetry, he creeps along with ten little words in every line, and helps out his Numbers with *For to*, and *Unto*, and all the pretty Expletives he can find, till he drags them to the end of another line; while the Sense is left tir'd half way behind it: he doubly starves all his Verses, first for want of thought, and then of expression; his Poetry neither has wit in it, nor seems to have it; like him in *Martial*.

Pauper videri Cinna vult, & est pauper:

He affects plainness, to cover his want of imagination: when he writes the serious way, the highest flight of his fancy is some miserable *Antithesis*, or seeming contradiction; and in the Cornick he is still reaching at some thin conceit, the ghost of a Jest, and that too flies before him, never to be caught; these Swallows which we see before us on the *Thames*, are the just resemblance of his Wit: you may observe how near the water they stoop, how many proffers they make to dip, and yet how seldome they touch it: and when they do, 'tis but the surface: they skim over it but to catch a gnat, and then mount into the Air and leave it. Well Gentlemen, said *Eugenius*, you may speak your pleasure of these Authors; but though I and some few more about the Town may give you a peaceable hearing, yet assure your selves, there are multitudes who would think you malicious and them injur'd: especially him whom you first described; he is the very *Withers* of the City: they

have bought more Editions of his Works then would serve to lay under all their Pies at the Lord Mayor's *Christmass*.  
 135 When his famous Poem first came out in the year 1660, I have seen them reading it in the midst of Change-time; nay so vehement they were at it, that they lost their bargain by the Candles ends: but what will you say, if he has been received amongst great Persons; I can assure you he is, this  
 140 day, the envy of one, who is Lord in the Art of Quibbling; and who does not take it well, that any man should intrude so far into his Province. All I would wish, replied *Crites*, is, that they who love his Writings, may still admire him, and his fellow Poet, *qui Bavium non odit*, &c. is curse sufficient.  
 145 And farther, added *Lisideius*, I believe there is no man who writes well, but would think he had hard measure, if their Admirers should praise any thing of his: *Nam quos contemnimus eorum quoque laudes contemnimus*. There are so few who write well in this Age, said *Crites*, that methinks any  
 150 praises should be wellcome; they neither rise to the dignity of the last Age, nor to any of the Ancients; and we may cry out of the Writers of this time, with more reason than *Petronius* of his, *Pace vestrâ liceat dixisse, primi omnium eloquentiam perdidistis*: you have debauched the true old Poetry  
 155 so far, that Nature, which is the soul of it, is not in any of your Writings.

If your quarrel (said *Eugenius*) to those who now write, be grounded only on your reverence to Antiquity, there is no man more ready to adore those great Greeks and Romans  
 160 than I am: but on the other side, I cannot think so contemptibly of the Age in which I live or so dishonourably of my own Countrey, as not to judge we equal the Ancients

139 great Persons.] the great Ones? 140 one.] a great person,  
 146 think...if] think himself very hardly dealt with, if 158 on]  
 upon 161 Age...or] Age I live in, or

in most kinds of Poesie, and in some surpass them; neither know I any reason why I may not be as zealous for the Reputation of our Age, as we find the Ancients themselves 165 were in reference to those who lived before them. For you hear your *Horace* saying,

Indignor quidquam reprehendi, non quia crasse  
Compositum, illepidè putetur, sed quia nuper.

And after,

170

Si meliora dies, ut vina, poemata reddit,  
Scire velim pretium chartis quotus arroget annus?

But I see I am ingaging in a wide dispute, where the arguments are not like to reach close on either side; for Poesie is of so large an extent, and so many both of the Ancients and 175 Moderns have done well in all kinds of it, that in citing one against the other, we shall take up more time this Evening, than each mans occasions will allow him: therefore I would ask *Crites* to what part of Poesie he would confine his Arguments, and whether he would defend the general cause 180 of the Ancients against the Moderns, or oppose any Age of the Moderns against this of ours?

*Crites* a little while considering upon this Demand, told *Eugenius* that if he pleased, he would limit their Dispute to 185 *Dramatique Poesie*; in which he thought it not difficult to prove, either that the Ancients were superior to the Moderns, or the last Age to this of ours.

*Eugenius* was somewhat surpriz'd, when he heard *Crites* make choice of the subject; For ought I see, said he, I have undertaken a harder Province than I imagin'd; for though I 190 never judg'd the Plays of the Greek or Roman Poets com-

166 were in] in 175 an extent,] extent,  
that if] *Eugenius* he approv'd his Propositions, and, if

184 *Eugenius*

parable to ours; yet on the other side those we now see acted, come short of many which were written in the last Age: but my comfort is if we are overcome, it will be  
 195 onely by our own Countrey-men: and if we yield to them in this one part of Poesie, we more surpass them in all the other; for in the Epique or Lyrique way it will be hard for them to shew us one such amongst them, as we have many now living, or who lately were. They can produce nothing  
 200 so courtly writ, or which expresses so much the Conversation of a Gentleman, as Sir *John Suckling*; nothing so even, sweet, and flowing as Mr. *Waller*; nothing so Majestique, so correct as Sir *John Denham*; nothing so elevated, so copious, and full of spirit, as Mr. *Cowley*; as for the Italian, French,  
 205 and Spanish Plays, I can make it evident, that those who now write, surpass them; and that the *Drama* is wholly ours.

All of them were thus far of *Eugenius* his opinion, that the sweetness of English Verse was never understood or practis'd by our Fathers; even *Crites* himself did not much  
 210 oppose it: and every one was willing to acknowledge how much our Poesie is improv'd, by the happiness of some Writers yet living; who first taught us to mould our thoughts into easie and significant words, to retrench the superfluities of expression, and to make our Rime so properly a  
 215 part of the Verse, that it should never mis-lead the sence, but it self be led and govern'd by it.

*Eugenius* was going to continue this Discourse, when *Lisideius* told him that it was necessary, before they proceeded further, to take a standing measure of their Controversie; for how was it possible to be decided who writ  
 220 the best Plays, before we know what a Play should be? but, this once agreed on by both Parties, each might have

recourse to it, either to prove his own advantages, or to discover the failings of his Adversary.

He had no sooner said this, but all desir'd the favour of him to give the definition of a Play; and they were the more importunate, because neither *Aristotle*, nor *Horace*, nor any other, who had writ of that Subject, had ever done it.

*Lisideius*, after some modest denials, at last confess'd he had a rude Notion of it; indeed rather a Description than a Definition: but which serv'd to guide him in his private thoughts, when he was to make a judgment of what others writ: that he conceiv'd a Play ought to be, *A just and lively Image of Humane Nature, representing its Passions and Humours, and the Changes of Fortune to which it is subject; for the Delight and Instruction of Mankind.*

This Definition, though *Crites* rais'd a Logical Objection against it; that it was onely a *genere & fine*, and so not altogether perfect; was yet well received by the rest: and after they had given order to the Water-men to turn their Barge, and row softly, that they might take the cool of the Evening in their return; *Crites*, being desired by the Company to begin, spoke on behalf of the Ancients, in this manner,

If Confidence presage a Victory, *Eugenius*, in his own opinion, has already triumphed over the Ancients; nothing seems more easie to him, than to overcome those whom it is our greatest praise to have imitated well: for we do not only build upon their foundations; but by their modell. *Dramatique Poesie* had time enough, reckoning from *Thespis* (who first invented it) to *Aristophanes*, to be born, to grow up, and to flourish in Maturity. It has been observed of Arts and Sciences, that in one and the same Century they have

223 to discover] discover  
dations;] foundation;

228 had writ] writ

249 foun-

arriv'd to great perfection; and no wonder, since every Age  
 255 has a kind of Universal Genius, which inclines those that  
 live in it to some particular Studies: the Work then being  
 push'd on by many hands, must of necessity go forward.

Is it not evident, in these last hundred years (when the  
 Study of Philosophy has been the business of all the *Virtuosi*  
 260 in *Christendome*) that almost a New Nature has been reveal'd  
 to us? that more errors of the School have been detected,  
 more useful Experiments in Philosophy have been made,  
 more Noble Secrets in Opticks, Medicine, Anatomy,  
 Astronomy, discover'd, than in all those credulous and  
 265 doting Ages from *Aristotle* to us? so true it is that nothing  
 spreads more fast than Science, when rightly and generally  
 cultivated.

Add to this the more than common emulation that was  
 in those times of writing well; which though it be found in  
 270 all Ages and all Persons that pretend to the same Reputa-  
 tion; yet Poesie being then in more esteem than now it is,  
 had greater Honours decreed to the Professors of it; and  
 consequently the Rivalship was more high between them;  
 they had Judges ordain'd to decide their Merit, and Prizes  
 275 to reward it: and Historians have been diligent to record of  
*Eschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, Lycophron*, and the rest of them,  
 both who they were that vanquish'd in these Wars of the  
 Theater, and how often they were crown'd: while the  
 Asian Kings, and Grecian Common-wealths scarce afforded  
 280 them a Nobler Subject than the unmanly Luxuries of a  
 Debauch'd Court, or giddy Intrigues of a Factious City.  
*Alit æmulatio ingenia* (says *Paterculus*) & *nunc invidia, nunc*  
*admiratio incitationem accendit*: Emulation is the Spur of Wit,  
 and sometimes Envy, sometimes Admiration quickens our  
 285 Endeavours.

But now since the Rewards of Honour are taken away, that Vertuous Emulation is turn'd into direct Malice; yet so slothful, that it contents it self to condemn and cry down others, without attempting to do better: 'Tis a Reputation too unprofitable, to take the necessary pains for it; yet wishing they had it, that desire is incitement enough to hinder others from it. And this, in short, *Eugenius*, is the reason, why you have now so few good Poets; and so many severe Judges: Certainly, to imitate the Ancients well, much labour and long study is required: which pains, I have already shewn, our Poets would want encouragement to take, if yet they had ability to go through the work. Those Ancients have been faithful Imitators and wise Observers of that Nature which is so torn and ill represented in our Plays; they have handed down to us a perfect resemblance of her; which we, like ill Copyers, neglecting to look on, have rendred monstrous, and disfigur'd. But, that you may know how much you are indebted to those your Masters, and be ashamed to have so ill requited them: I must remember you that all the Rules by which we practise the *Drama* at this day, (either such as relate to the justness and symmetry of the Plot; or the Episodical Ornaments, such as Descriptions, Narrations, and other Beauties, which are not essential to the Play;) were delivered to us from the Observations which *Aristotle* made, of those Poets, who either liv'd before him, or were his Contemporaries: we have added nothing of our own, except we have the confidence to say our wit is better; Of which none boast in this our Age, but such as understand not theirs. Of that Book which *Aristotle* has left

291 it, . . . is] it is      297 through . . . Those] through with it.  
 Those      306 (either . . . Play;)] either . . . Play;      310 which]  
 that      310 who] which      313 Of . . . our] which none boast  
 of in our

315 us περὶ τῆς Ποιητικῆς, Horace his *Art of Poetry* is an excellent Comment, and, I believe, restores to us that Second Book of his concerning Comedy, which is wanting in him.

Out of these two have been extracted the Famous Rules which the French call, *Des Trois Unitez*, or, (The Three  
320 Unities, which ought to be observ'd in every Regular Play; namely, of Time, Place, and Action.)

The unity of Time they comprehend in 24 hours, the compass of a Natural Day; or as near it as can be contriv'd: and the reason of it is obvious to every one, that the time  
325 of the feigned action, or fable of the Play, should be proportion'd as near as can be to the duration of that time in which it is represented; since therefore all Playes are acted on the Theater in a space of time much within the compass of 24 hours, that Play is to be thought the nearest imitation  
330 of Nature, whose Plot or Action is confin'd within that time; and, by the same Rule which concludes this general proportion of time, it follows, that all the parts of it are (as near as may be) to be equally sub-divided; namely, that one act take not up the suppos'd time of half a day; which is out of  
335 proportion to the rest: since the other four are then to be straightned within the compass of the remaining half; for it is unnatural that one Act, which being spoke or written, is not longer than the rest, should be suppos'd longer by the Audience; 'tis therefore the Poets duty, to take care that no  
340 Act should be imagin'd to exceed the time in which it is represented on the Stage; and that the intervalls and inequalities of time be suppos'd to fall out between the Acts.

This Rule of Time how well it has been observ'd by the Ancients, most of their Playes will witness; you see them in  
345 their Tragedies (wherein to follow this Rule, is certainly

318 have] has  
namely.

332 are . . . to] are to

333 namely,] as

most difficult) from the very beginning of their Playes, falling close into that part of the Story which they intend for the action or principal object of it; leaving the former part to be delivered by Narration: so that they set the Audience, as it were, at the Post where the Race is to be concluded: and, saving them the tedious expectation of seeing the Poet set out and ride the beginning of the Course, they suffer you not to behold him, till he is in sight of the Goal, and just upon you. 350

For the Second Unity, which is that of place, the Ancients meant by it, That the Scene ought to be continu'd through the Play, in the same place where it was laid in the beginning: for the Stage, on which it is represented, being but one and the same place, it is unnatural to conceive it many; and those far distant from one another. I will not deny but by the variation of painted Scenes, the fancy (which in these cases will contribute to its own deceit) may sometimes imagine it several places, with some appearance of probability; yet it still carries the greater likelihood of Truth, if those places be suppos'd so near each other, as in the same Town or City; which may all be comprehended under the larger Denomination of one place: for a greater distance will bear no proportion to the shortness of time, which is allotted in the acting, to pass from one of them to another; for the Observation of this, next to the Antients, the French are to be most commended. They tie themselves so strictly to the unity of place, that you never see in any of their Plays, a Scene chang'd in the middle of an Act: if the Act begins in a Garden, a Street, or Chamber, 'tis ended in the same place; and that you may know it to be the same, the Stage is so supplied with persons that it is never empty all 355 360 365 370 375

the time: he who enters second has business with him who was on before; and before the second quits the Stage, a third appears who has business with him.

380 This *Corneille* calls *La Liaison des Scenes*, the continuity or joyning of the Scenes; and 'tis a good mark of a well contriv'd Play when all the Persons are known to each other, and every one of them has some affairs with all the rest.

As for the third Unity which is that of Action, the  
385 Ancients meant no other by it than what the Logicians do by their *Finis*, the end or scope of any action: that which is the first in Intention, and last in Execution: now the Poet is to aim at one great and compleat action, to the carrying on of which all things in his Play, even the very obstacles, are to  
390 be subservient; and the reason of this is as evident as any of the former.

For two Actions equally labour'd and driven on by the Writer, would destroy the unity of the Poem; it would be no longer one Play, but two: not but that there may be  
395 many actions in a Play, as *Ben. Johnson* has observ'd in his *Discoveries*; but they must be all subservient to the great one, which our language happily expresses in the name of under-plots: such as in *Terences Eunuch* is the difference and reconcilement of *Thais* and *Phædria*, which is not the cheif  
400 business of the Play, but promotes the marriage of *Chærea* and *Chremes's* Sister, principally intended by the Poet. There ought to be but one action, says *Corneille*, that is one compleat action which leaves the mind of the Audience in a full repose: But this cannot be brought to pass but by many  
405 other imperfect actions which conduce to it, and hold the Audience in a delightful suspense of what will be.

If by these Rules (to omit many other drawn from the Precepts and Practice of the Ancients) we should judge our

377 he . . . second] he that enters the second

405 actions] ones

modern Plays; 'tis probable, that few of them would endure the tryal: that which should be the business of a day, takes up in some of them an age; instead of one action they are the Epitomes of a mans life; and for one spot of ground (which the Stage should represent) we are sometimes in more Countries than the Map can shew us. 410

But if we will allow the Ancients to have contriv'd well, we must acknowledge them to have written better; questionless we are depriv'd of a great stock of wit in the loss of *Menander* among the Greek Poets, and of *Cæcilius*, *Affranius* and *Varius*, among the Romans: we may guess at *Menanders* Excellency by the Plays of *Terence*, who translated some of them: and yet wanted so much of him that he was call'd by *C. Cæsar* the Half-*Menander*; and may judge of *Varius*, by the Testimonies of *Horace*, *Martial*, and *Velleius Paterculus*: 'Tis probable that these, could they be recover'd, would decide the controversie; but so long as *Aristophanes* and *Plautus* are extant; while the Tragedies of *Eurypides*, *Sophocles*, and *Seneca* are in our hands, I can never see one of those Plays which are now written, but it encreases my admiration of the Ancients; and yet I must acknowledge further, that to admire them as we ought, we should understand them better than we do. Doubtless many things appear flat to us, the wit of which depended on some custom or story which never came to our knowledge, or perhaps on some Criticism in their language, which being so long dead, and only remaining in their Books, 'tis not possible they should make us understand perfectly. To read *Macrobius*, explaining the propriety and elegancy of many 415 420 425 430 435

416 written] writ 419 at] of 421 them:] his, 422  
and . . . of] and of 425 *Aristophanes* . . . extant] *Aristophanes* in  
the old Comedy, and *Plautus* in the new are extant 427 are . . . I]  
are to be had, I 432 us, . . . some] us, whose wit depended upon  
some 434 on] upon 436 understand] know it

words in *Virgil*, which I had before pass'd over without consideration, as common things, is enough to assure me that I  
 440 ought to think the same of *Terence*; and that in the purity of his style (which *Tully* so much valued that he ever carried his works about him) there is yet left in him great room for admiration, if I knew but where to place it. In the mean time I must desire you to take notice, that the greatest man of the  
 445 last age (*Ben. Johnson*) was willing to give place to them in all things: He was not only a professed Imitator of *Horace*, but a learned Plagiary of all the others; you track him every where in their Snow: If *Horace*, *Lucan*, *Petronius Arbiter*, *Seneca*, and *Juvenal*, had their own from him, there are few  
 450 serious thoughts which are new in him; you will pardon me therefore if I presume he lov'd their fashion when he wore their cloaths. But since I have otherwise a great veneration for him, and you, *Eugenius*, prefer him above all other Poets, I will use no farther argument to you than his  
 455 example: I will produce before you Father *Ben.* dress'd in all the ornaments and colours of the Ancients, you will need no other guide to our Party if you follow him; and whether you consider the bad Plays of our Age, or regard the good Plays of the last, both the best and worst of the  
 460 Modern Poets will equally instruct you to admire the Ancients.

*Crites* had no sooner left speaking, but *Eugenius*, who had waited with some impatience for it, thus began:

I have observ'd in your Speech that the former part of it  
 465 is convincing as to what the Moderns have profited by the rules of the Ancients, but in the latter you are careful to conceal how much they have excell'd them: we own all the

455 produce . . . dress'd] produce Father *Ben.* to you, dress'd  
 459 good Plays] good ones 460 admire] esteem 462 had  
 waited] waited

helps we have from them, and want neither Veneration nor Gratitude while we acknowledge that to overcome them we must make use of the advantages we have receiv'd from them; but to these Assistances we have joyned our own industry; for (had we sate down with a dull imitation of them) we might then have lost somewhat of the old perfection, but never acquir'd any that was new. We draw not therefore after their lines, but those of Nature; and having the life before us, besides the experience of all they knew, it is no wonder if we hit some airs and features which they have miss'd; I deny not what you urge of Arts and Sciences, that they have flourish'd in some ages more than others; but your instance in Philosophy makes for me: for if Natural Causes be more known now than in the time of Aristotle, because more studied, it follows that Poesie and other Arts may with the same pains arrive still neerer to perfection, and, that granted, it will rest for you to prove that they wrought more perfect Images of humane life than we; which, seeing in your Discourse you have avoided to make good, it shall now be my task to shew you some part of their defects, and some few Excellencies of the Moderns; and I think there is none among us can imagine I do it enviously, or with purpose to detract from them; for what interest of Fame or Profit can the living lose by the reputation of the dead? on the other side, it is a great truth which *Velleius Paterculus* affirms, *Audita visis libentius laudamus; & præsentia invidiâ, præterita admiratione prosequimur; & his nos obrui, illis instrui credimus:* That praise or censure is certainly the most sincere which unbrib'd posterity shall give us.

Be pleased then in the first place to take notice, that the Greek Poesie, which *Crites* has affirm'd to have arriv'd to perfection in the Reign of the old Comedy, was so far from

it, that the distinction of it into Acts was not known to them; or if it were, it is yet so darkly deliver'd to us that we cannot make it out.

All we know of it is from the singing of their Chorus, and  
 505 that too is so uncertain that in some of their Plays we have reason to conjecture they sung more than five times: *Aristotle* indeed divides the integral parts of a Play into four: First, The *Protasis* or entrance, which gives light only to the Characters of the persons, and proceeds very little into any  
 510 part of the action: Secondly, The *Epitasis*, or working up of the Plot where the Play grows warmer: the design or action of it is drawing on, and you see something promising that it will come to pass: Thirdly, the *Catastasis*, call'd by the Romans, *Status*, the heighth, and full growth of the Play:  
 515 we may call it properly the Counterturn, which destroys that expectation, imbroyls the action in new difficulties, and leaves you far distant from that hope in which it found you, as you may have observ'd in a violent stream resisted by a narrow passage: it runs round to an eddy, and carries back  
 520 the waters with more swiftness than it brought them on: Lastly, the *Catastrophe*, which the Grecians call'd *λύσις*, the French *le denouement*, and we the discovery or unravelling of the Plot: there you see all things settling again upon their first foundations, and the obstacles which hindred the design  
 525 or action of the Play once remov'd, it ends with that resemblance of truth and nature, that the audience are satisfied with the conduct of it. Thus this great man deliver'd to us the image of a Play, and I must confess it is so lively that from thence much light has been deriv'd to the forming it  
 530 more perfectly into Acts and Scenes; but what Poet first limited to five the number of the Acts I know not; only we

513 *Catastasis* . . . which] *Catastasis*, or Counterturn, which  
 21 *λύσις*] *δεσις* 530 Acts and Scenes; 1668] Acts Scenes; 1684

see it so firmly establish'd in the time of *Horace*, that he gives it for a rule in Comedy; *Neu brevior quinto, neu sit productior actu*: So that you see the Grecians cannot be said to have consummated this Art; writing rather by Entrances than by Acts, and having rather a general indigested notion of a Play, than knowing how and where to bestow the particular graces of it. 535

But since the Spaniards at this day allow but three Acts, which they call *Jornadas*, to a Play; and the Italians in many of theirs follow them, when I condemn the Ancients, I declare it is not altogether because they have not five Acts to every Play, but because they have not confin'd themselves to one certain number; 'tis building an House without a Model: and when they succeeded in such undertakings, they ought to have sacrific'd to Fortune, not to the Muses. 545

Next, for the Plot, which *Aristotle* call'd *τὸ μῦθος*, and often *τῶν πραγμάτων σύνθεσις*, and from him the Romans *Fabula*, it has already been judiciously observ'd by a late Writer, that in their Tragedies it was only some Tale deriv'd from *Thebes* or *Troy*, or at least some thing that happen'd in those two Ages; which was worn so thred bare by the Pens of all the Epique Poets, and even by Tradition it self of the Talkative Greeklings (as *Ben. Johnson* calls them) that before it came upon the Stage, it was already known to all the Audience: and the people so soon as ever they heard the Name of *Oedipus*, knew as well as the Poet, that he had kill'd his Father by a mistake, and committed Incest with his Mother, before the Play; that they were now to hear of a great Plague, an Oracle, and the Ghost of *Laius*: so that they sate with a yawning kind of expectation, till he was to come with his eyes pull'd out, and speak a hundred or more 550

Verses in a Tragick tone, in complaint of his misfortunes. But one *Oedipus*, *Hercules*, or *Medea*, had been tolerable; 565 poor people they scap'd not so good cheap: they had still the *Chapon Bouillé* set before them, till their appetites were cloy'd with the same dish, and the Novelty being gone, the pleasure vanish'd: so that one main end of *Dramatique Poesie* in its Definition, which was to cause Delight, was of consequence destroy'd. 570

In their Comedies, the Romans generally borrow'd their Plots from the Greek Poets; and theirs was commonly a little Girl stollen or wandred from her Parents, brought back unknown to the City, there got with child by some 575 lewd young fellow; who, by the help of his servant, cheats his father, and when her time comes, to cry *Juno Lucina fer open*; one or other sees a little Box or Cabinet which was carried away with her, and so discovers her to her friends, if some God do not prevent it, by coming down in a Machine, 580 and taking the thanks of it to himself.

By the Plot you may guess much of the Characters of the Persons. An Old Father who would willingly before he dies, see his Son well married; his Debauch'd Son, kind in his Nature to his Mistres, but miserably in want of Money; 585 a Servant or Slave, who has so much wit to strike in with him, and help to dupe his Father, a Braggadochio Captain, a Parasite, and a Lady of Pleasure.

As for the poor honest Maid, on whom the Story is built, and who ought to be one of the principal Actors in the Play, 590 she is commonly a Mute in it: She has the breeding of the Old *Elizabeth* way, which was for Maids to be seen and not

574 the City,] the same City, 580 taking] take 582  
 who] that 584 Mistres,] Wench, 588 Maid, . . . and]  
 Maid, whom all the story is built upon, and 591 way, . . . for]  
 way, for

to be heard; and it is enough you know she is willing to be married, when the Fifth Act requires it.

These are Plots built after the Italian Mode of Houses, you see thorow them all at once; the Characters are indeed 595 the Imitations of Nature, but so narrow as if they had imitated only an Eye or an Hand, and did not dare to venture on the lines of a Face, or the Proportion of a Body.

But in how straight a compass soever they have bounded their Plots and Characters, we will pass it by, if they have 600 regularly pursued them, and perfectly observ'd those three Unities of Time, Place, and Action: the knowledge of which you say is deriv'd to us from them. But in the first place give me leave to tell you, that the Unity of Place, how ever it might be practised by them, was never any of their Rules: 605 We neither find it in *Aristotle*, *Horace*, or any who have written of it, till in our age the French Poets first made it a Precept of the Stage. The unity of time, even *Terence* himself (who was the best and most regular of them) has neglected: His *Heautontimoroumenos* or *Self-Punisher* takes 610 up visibly two days; says *Scaliger*, the two first Acts concluding the first day, the three last the day ensuing; and *Eurypides*, in tying himself to one day, has committed an absurdity never to be forgiven him: for in one of his Tragedies he has made *Theseus* go from *Athens* to *Thebes*, 615 which was about 40 English miles, under the walls of it to give battel, and appear victorious in the next Act; and yet from the time of his departure to the return of the *Nuntius*, who gives the relation of his Victory, *Æthra* and the Chorus have but 36 Verses; which is not for every Mile a Verse. 620

The like errour is as evident in *Terence* his *Eunuch*, when

611 days; says] dayes; therefore, says 612 day, . . . *Eurypides*,]  
day, were acted over-night; the three last on the ensuing day: and  
*Eurypides*, 620 which] that

*Laches*, the old man, enters by mistake into the house of *Thais*, where betwixt his Exit and the entrance of *Pythias*, who comes to give ample relation of the disorders he has  
 625 rais'd within, *Parmeno* who was left upon the Stage, has not above five lines to speak: *C'est bien employer un temps si court*, says the French Poet, who furnish'd me with one of the observations; And almost all their Tragedies will afford us examples of the like nature.

630 'Tis true, they have kept the continuity, or as you call'd it, *Liaison des Scenes* somewhat better: two do not perpetually come in together, talk, and go out together; and other two succeed them, and do the same throughout the Act, which the English call by the name of single Scenes; but the  
 635 reason is, because they have seldom above two or three Scenes, properly so call'd, in every act; for it is to be accounted a new Scene, not only every time the Stage is empty, but every person who enters, though to others, makes it so; because he introduces a new business: Now  
 640 the Plots of their Plays being narrow, and the persons few, one of their Acts was written in a less compass than one of our well wrought Scenes, and yet they are often deficient even in this: To go no further than *Terence*, you find in the *Eunuch Antipho* entring single in the midst of the third Act,  
 645 after *Chremes* and *Pythias* were gone off: In the same Play you have likewise *Dorias* beginning the fourth Act alone; and after she has made a relation of what was done at the Souldiers entertainment (which by the way was very inartificial) because she was presum'd to speak directly to the  
 650 Audience, and to acquaint them with what was necessary to be known, but yet should have been so contriv'd by the

622 enters . . . house] enters in a mistake the house  
 . . . he] give an ample relation of the Garboyles he  
 employé 626 employer]  
 637 not only every] not every

Poet as to have been told by persons of the *Drama* to one another, (and so by them to have come to the knowledge of the people) she quits the Stage, and *Phædria* enters next, alone likewise: He also gives you an account of himself, and of his returning from the Country in *Monologue*, to which unnatural way of narration *Terence* is subject in all his Plays: In his *Adelphi* or Brothers, *Syrus* and *Demea* enter; after the Scene was broken by the departure of *Sostrata*, *Geta* and *Canthara*; and indeed you can scarce look into any of his Comedies, where you will not presently discover the same interruption. 655 660

But as they have fail'd both in laying of their Plots, and in the management, swerving from the Rules of their own Art, by mis-representing Nature to us, in which they have ill satisfied one intention of a Play, which was delight, so in the instructive part they have err'd worse: instead of punishing Vice and rewarding Virtue, they have often shewn a Prosperous Wickedness, and an Unhappy Piety: They have set before us a bloody image of revenge in *Medea*, and given her Dragons to convey her safe from punishment. A *Priam* and *Astyanax* murder'd, and *Cassandra* ravish'd, and the lust and murder ending in the victory of him who acted them: In short, there is no indecorum in any of our modern Plays, which if I would excuse, I could not shaddow with some Authority from the Ancients. 665 670 675

And one farther note of them let me leave you: Tragedies and Comedies were not writ then as they are now, promiscuously, by the same person; but he who found his genius bending to the one, never attempted the other way. This is so plain, that I need not instance to you, that *Aristophanes*, *Plautus*, *Terence*, never any of them writ a Tragedy; 680

661 same interruption. 1663] same in interruption. 1684 663 and  
... swerving] and managing of them, swerving 674 who] that

*Æschylus, Eurypides, Sophocles and Seneca*, never medled  
 with Comedy: the Sock and Buskin were not worn by the  
 685 same Poet: having then so much care to excel in one kind,  
 very little is to be pardon'd them if they miscarried in it;  
 and this would lead me to the consideration of their wit,  
 had not *Crites* given me sufficient warning not to be too bold  
 in my judgment of it; because the languages being dead,  
 690 and many of the Customs and little accidents on which it  
 depended, lost to us, we are not competent judges of it.  
 But though I grant that here and there we may miss the  
 application of a Proverb or a Custom, yet a thing well said  
 will be wit in all Languages; and though it may lose some-  
 695 thing in the Translation, yet to him who reads it in the  
 Original, 'tis still the same; He has an Idea of its excellency,  
 though it cannot pass from his mind into any other expres-  
 sion or words than those in which he finds it. When  
*Phædria*—in the *Eunuch* had a command from his Mistress  
 700 to be absent two days; and encouraging himself to go  
 through with it, said; *Tandem ego non illa caream, si opus sit,*  
*vel totum triduum?* *Parmeno* to mock the softness of his  
 Master, lifting up his hands and eyes, cryes out as it were in  
 admiration; *Hu! universum triduum!* the elegancy of which  
 705 *universum*, though it cannot be rendred in our language, yet  
 leaves an impression on our souls: but this happens seldom  
 in him, in *Plautus* oftner; who is infinitely too bold in his  
 Metaphors and coyning words; out of which many times  
 his wit is nothing, which questionless was one reason why  
 710 *Horace* falls upon him so severely in those Verses:

Sed Proavi nostri Plautinos & numeros, &  
 Laudavere sales, nimium patienter utrumque  
 Ne dicam stolidè.

706 impression on our] impression of the wit upon our

For *Horace* himself was cautious to obtrude a new word on his Readers, and makes custom and common use the best measure of receiving it into our writings. 715

Multa renascentur quæ nunc cecidere, cadentq;  
Quæ nunc sunt in honore vocabula, si volet usus,  
Quem penes, arbitrium est, & jus, & norma loquendi.

The not observing this Rule is that which the world has blam'd in our Satyrist *Cleveland*; to express a thing hard and unnaturally, is his new way of Elocution: 'Tis true, no Poet but may sometimes use a *Catachresis*, *Virgil* does it; 720

Mistaque ridenti Colocasia fundet Acantho.

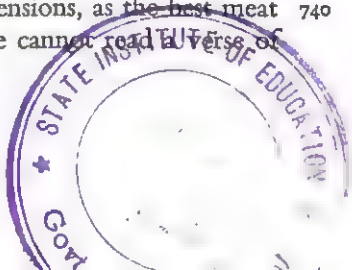
In his Eclogue of *Pollio*, and in his 7th *Æneid*. 725

Mirantur & undæ,  
Miratur nemus, insuetum fulgentia longe,  
Scuta virum fluvio, pictasq; innare carinas.

And *Ovid* once so modestly, that he asks leave to do it;

Si verbo audacia detur  
Haud metuam summi dixisse Palatia cœli. 730

Calling the Court of *Jupiter* by the name of *Augustus* his Pallace, though in another place he is more bold, where he says, *Et longas visent Capitolia pompas*. But to do this always, and never be able to write a line without it, though it may be admir'd by some few Pedants, will not pass upon those who know that wit is best convey'd to us in the most easie language; and is most to be admir'd when a great thought comes drest in words so commonly receiv'd that it is understood by the meanest apprehensions, as the best meat is the most easily digested: but we cannot read a Verse of 735 740



*Cleveland's* without making a face at it, as if every word were a Pill to swallow: he gives us many times a hard Nut to break our Teeth, without a Kernel for our pains. So that  
 745 there is this difference betwixt his *Satyres* and Doctor *Downs*, That the one gives us deep thoughts in common language, though rough cadence; the other gives us common thoughts in abstruse words: 'tis true, in some places his wit is independent of his words, as in that of the *Rebel*  
 750 *Scot*:

Had Cain been Scot God would have chang'd his doom;  
 Not forc'd him wander, but confin'd him home,

*Si sic, omnia dixisset!* This is wit in all languages: 'tis like Mercury, never to be lost or kill'd; and so that other;

755 For Beauty like White-powder makes no noise,  
 And yet the silent Hypocrite destroys.

You see the last line is highly Metaphorical, but it is so soft and gentle that it does not shock us as we read it.

But, to return from whence I have digress'd, to the  
 760 consideration of the Ancients Writing and their Wit, (of which by this time you will grant us in some measure to be fit judges,) Though I see many excellent thoughts in *Seneca*, yet he, of them who had a Genius most proper for the Stage, was *Ovid*; he had a way of writing so fit to stir up a  
 765 pleasing admiration and concernment, which are the objects of a Tragedy, and to shew the various movements of a Soul combating betwixt two different Passions, that, had he liv'd in our Age, or in his own could have writ with our advantages, no man but must have yeilded to him; and  
 770 therefore I am confident the *Medea* is none of his: for, though I esteem it for the gravity and sententiousness of it, which he himself concludes to be suitable to a Tragedy,

*Omne genus scripti gravitate Tragædia vincit*, yet it moves not  
 my soul enough to judge that he, who in the Epique way  
 wrote things so near the *Drama*, as the Story of *Myrrha*, of 775  
*Caunus* and *Biblis*, and the rest, should stir up no more con-  
 cernment where he most endeavour'd it. The Master-piece  
 of *Seneca* I hold to be that Scene in the *Troades*, where  
*Ulysses* is seeking for *Astyanax* to kill him; There you  
 see the tenderness of a Mother, so represented in *Andro-* 780  
*mache*, that it raises compassion to a high degree in the  
 Reader, and bears the nearest resemblance of any thing in the  
 Tragedies of the Ancients, to the excellent Scenes of Passion  
 in *Shakespeare*, or in *Fletcher*: for Love-Scenes you will find 785  
 few among them, their Tragique Poets dealt not with that  
 soft passion, but with Lust, Cruelty, Revenge, Ambition,  
 and those bloody actions they produc'd; which were more  
 capable of raising horror than compassion in an audience:  
 leaving Love untoucht, whose gentleness would have  
 temper'd them, which is the most frequent of all the passions, 790  
 and which being the private concernment of every person,  
 is sooth'd by viewing its own image in a publick enter-  
 tainment.

Among their Comedies, we find a Scene or two of  
 tenderness, and that where you would least expect it, in 795  
*Plautus*; but to speak generally, their Lovers say little, when  
 they see each other, but *anima mea, vita mea*; ζῶη καὶ ψυχῇ,  
 as the women in *Juvenal's* time us'd to cry out in the fury of  
 their kindness: Any sudden gust of passion (as an extasie of  
 love in an unexpected meeting) cannot better be express'd 800  
 than in a word and a sigh, breaking one another. Nature is  
 dumb on such occasions, and to make her speak, would be

782 in . . . to] in their Tragedies to  
 799 kindness: Any] kindness: then indeed to speak sense were an  
 offence. Any

to represent her unlike her self. But there are a thousand  
 other concernments of Lovers, as jealousies, complaints,  
 805 contrivances and the like, where not to open their minds at  
 large to each other, were to be wanting to their own love,  
 and to the expectation of the Audience; who watch the  
 movements of their minds, as much as the changes of their  
 fortunes. For the imaging of the first is properly the work  
 810 of a Poet, the latter he borrows from the Historian.

*Eugenius* was proceeding in that part of his Discourse,  
 when *Crites* interrupted him. I see, said he, *Eugenius* and I  
 are never like to have this Question decided betwixt us;  
 for he maintains the Moderns have acquir'd a new perfec-  
 815 tion in writing, I can only grant they have alter'd the  
 mode of it. *Homer* describ'd his Heroes men of great  
 appetites, lovers of beef broild upon the coals, and good  
 fellows; contrary to the practice of the French Romances,  
 whose Heroes neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep, for love.  
 820 *Virgil* makes *Æneas* a bold Avower of his own virtues,

Sum pius *Æneas* fama super æthera notus;

which in the civility of our Poets is the Character of a Fan-  
 faron or Hector: for with us the Knight takes occasion to  
 walk out, or sleep, to avoid the vanity of telling his own  
 825 Story, which the trusty Squire is ever to perform for him.  
 So in their Love Scenes, of which *Eugenius* spoke last, the  
 Ancients were more hearty, we more talkative: they writ  
 love as it was then the mode to make it, and I will grant  
 thus much to *Eugenius*, that perhaps one of their Poets, had  
 830 he liv'd in our Age,

Si foret hoc nostrum fato delapsus in ævum,

(as *Horace* says of *Lucilius*) he had alter'd many things; not

810 from] of

that they were not natural before, but that he might accommodate himself to the Age in which he liv'd; yet in the mean time we are not to conclude any thing rashly 835 against those great men, but preserve to them the dignity of Masters, and give that honour to their memories, (*Quos libitina sacravit*;) part of which we expect may be paid to us in future times.

This moderation of *Crites*, as it was pleasing to all the company, so it put an end to that dispute; which, *Eugenius*, who seem'd to have the better of the Argument, would urge no farther: but *Lisideius* after he had acknowledg'd himself of *Eugenius* his opinion concerning the Ancients; yet told him he had forborn, till his Discourse were ended, 845 to ask him why he prefer'd the English Plays above those of other Nations? and whether we ought not to submit our Stage to the exactness of our next Neighbours?

Though, said *Eugenius*, I am at all times ready to defend the honour of my Country against the French, and to 850 maintain, we are as well able to vanquish them with our Pens as our Ancestors have been with their swords; yet, if you please, added he, looking upon *Neander*, I will commit this cause to my friend's management; his opinion of our Plays is the same with mine: and besides, there is no reason, 855 that *Crites* and I, who have now left the Stage, should re-enter so suddenly upon it; which is against the Laws of Comedie.

If the Question had been stated, replied *Lisideius*, who had writ best, the French or English forty years ago, I 860 should have been of your opinion, and adjudg'd the honour to our own Nation; but since that time, (said he, turning towards *Neander*) we have been so long together bad

833 not natural] not as natural  
liv'd in: yet

834 Age . . . yet] Age he

Englishmen, that we had not leisure to be good Poets;  
865 *Beaumont, Fletcher, and Johnson* (who were only capable of  
bringing us to that degree of perfection which we have)  
were just then leaving the world; as if in an Age of so much  
horror, wit and those milder studies of humanity, had no  
farther business among us. But the Muses, who ever follow  
870 Peace, went to plant in another Countrey; it was then, that  
the great Cardinal of *Richlieu* began to take them into his  
protection; and that, by his encouragement, *Corneil* and  
some other French-men reform'd their Theatre, (which  
before was as much below ours as it now surpasses it and the  
875 rest of *Europe*;) but because *Crites*, in his Discourse for the  
Ancients, has prevented me, by observing many Rules of  
the Stage, which the Moderns have borrow'd from them; I  
shall only, in short, demand of you, whether you are not  
convinc'd that of all Nations the French have best observ'd  
880 them? In the unity of time you find them so scrupulous, that  
it yet remains a dispute among their Poets, whether the  
artificial day of twelve hours more or less, be not meant by  
*Aristotle*, rather than the natural one of twenty four; and  
consequently whether all Plays ought not to be reduc'd into  
885 that compass? This I can testifie, that in all their *Dramas* writ  
within these last 20 years and upwards, I have not observ'd  
any that have extended the time to thirty hours: in the unity  
of place they are full as scrupulous, for many of their Criticks  
limit it to that very spot of ground where the Play is  
890 suppos'd to begin; none of them exceed the compass of the  
same Town or City.

The unity of Action in all their Plays is yet more conspicuous, for they do not burden them with under-plots, as the English do; which is the reason why many Scenes of our

Tragi-comedies carry on a design that is nothing of kin to 895  
 the main Plot; and that we see two distinct webbs in a Play,  
 like those in ill wrought stuffs; and two actions, that is, two  
 Plays carried on together, to the confounding of the Audi-  
 ence; who, before they are warm in their concernments for  
 one part, are diverted to another; and by that means 900  
 espouse the interest of neither. From hence likewise it arises  
 that the one half of our Actors are not known to the other.  
 They keep their distances as if they were *Mountagues* and  
*Capulets*, and seldom begin an acquaintance till the last  
 Scene of the Fifth Act, when they are all to meet upon the 905  
 Stage. There is no Theatre in the world has any thing so  
 absurd as the English Tragi-comedie, 'tis a *Drama* of our  
 own invention, and the fashion of it is enough to proclaim  
 it so; here a course of mirth, there another of sadness and  
 passion; And a third of honour, and a Duel: Thus in two 910  
 hours and a half we run through all the fits of *Bedlam*. The  
 French affords you as much variety on the same day, but  
 they do it not so unseasonably, or *mal a propos* as we: Our  
 Poets present you the Play and the farce together; and our  
 Stages still retain somewhat of the Original civility of the 915  
 Red-Bull;

Atque ursum & pugiles media inter carmina poscunt.

The end of Tragedies or serious Plays, says *Aristotle*,  
 is to beget admiration, compassion, or concernment; but  
 are not mirth and compassion things incompatible? and is it 920  
 not evident that the Poet must of necessity destroy the  
 former by intermingling of the latter? that is, he must ruine  
 the sole end and object of his Tragedy to introduce some-  
 what that is forced in to it; and is not of the body of it:

910 passion; . . . Duel] passion; a third of honour, and fourth a Due  
 924 in to it;] in,

925 Would you not think that Physician mad, who having  
prescribed a Purge, should immediately order you to take  
restringents?

But to leave our Playes, and return to theirs, I have noted  
one great advantage they have had in the Plotting of their  
930 Tragedies; that is, they are always groundd upon some  
known History: according to that of *Horace*, *Ex noto fictum  
carmen sequar*; and in that they have so imitated the Ancients,  
that they have surpass'd them. For the Ancients, as was  
observ'd before, took for the foundation of their Plays  
935 some Poetical Fiction, such as under that consideration  
could move but little concernment in the Audience, because  
they already knew the event of it. But the French goes  
farther;

Atque ita mentitur; sic veris falsa remiscet,  
940 Primo ne medium, medio ne discrepet imum:

He so interweaves Truth with probable Fiction, that he  
puts a pleasing Fallacy upon us; mends the intrigues of Fate,  
and dispenses with the severity of History, to reward that  
vertue which has been rendred to us there unfortunate.  
945 Sometimes the story has left the success so doubtful, that the  
Writer is free, by the priviledge of a Poet, to take that which  
of two or more relations will best sute with his design:  
As for example, in the death of *Cyrus*, whom *Justin* and  
some others report to have perish'd in the *Scythian* war, but  
950 *Xenophon* affirms to have died in his bed of extream old age.  
Nay more, when the event is past dispute, even then we are  
willing to be deceiv'd, and the Poet, if he contrives it with  
appearance of truth, has all the audience of his Party; at least  
during the time his Play is acting: so naturally we are kind  
955 to vertue, when our own interest is not in question, that we

927 restringents?    restringents upon it?    948 in the] the

take it up as the general concernment of Mankind. On the other side, if you consider the Historical Plays of *Shakespeare*, they are rather so many Chronicles of Kings, or the business many times of thirty or forty years, crampt into a representation of two hours and an half, which is not to imitate or paint Nature, but rather to draw her in miniature, to take her in little; to look upon her through the wrong end of a Perspective, and receive her Images not only much less, but infinitely more imperfect than the life: this, instead of making a Play delightful, renders it ridiculous.

Quodcumque ostendis mihi sic, incredulus odi.

For the Spirit of man cannot be satisfied but with truth, or at least verisimilitude; and a Poem is to contain, if not τὰ ἔτυμα, yet ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοία, as one of the Greek Poets has express'd it.

Another thing in which the French differ from us and from the Spaniards, is, that they do not embarrass, or cumber themselves with too much Plot: they only represent so much of a Story as will constitute one whole and great action sufficient for a Play; we, who undertake more, do but multiply adventures; which, not being produc'd from one another, as effects from causes, but barely following, constitute many actions in the Drama, and consequently make it many Plays.

But by pursuing closely one argument, which is not cloy'd with many turns, the French have gain'd more liberty for verse, in which they write: they have leisure to dwell on a subject which deserves it; and to represent the passions (which we have acknowledg'd to be the Poets work) without being hurried from one thing to another, as

960 an] a

980 closely] close

983 on] upon

we are in the Plays of *Calderon*, which we have seen lately upon our Theaters, under the name of Spanish Plots. I have taken notice but of one Tragedy of ours, whose Plot has that uniformity and unity of design in it which I have com-  
 990 mended in the French; and that is *Rollo*, or rather, under the name of *Rollo*, The Story of *Bassianus* and *Geta* in *Herodian*; there indeed the Plot is neither large nor intricate, but just enough to fill the minds of the Audience, not to cloy them. Besides, you see it founded upon the truth of History, only  
 995 the time of the action is not reduceable to the strictness of the Rules; and you see in some places a little farce mingled, which is below the dignity of the other parts; and in this all our Poets are extreemly peccant, even *Ben Johnson* himself in *Sejanus* and *Catiline* has given us this Oleo of a Play: this  
 1000 unnatural mixture of Comedy and Tragedy, which to me sounds just as ridiculously as the History of *David* with the merry humours of *Golia's*. In *Sejanus* you may take notice of the Scene betwixt *Livia* and the Physician, which is a pleasant Satyre upon the artificial helps of beauty: In *Catiline*  
 1005 you may see the Parliament of Women; the little envies of them to one another; and all that passes betwixt *Curio* and *Fulvia*: Scenes admirable in their kind, but of an ill mingle with the rest.

But I return again to the French Writers; who, as I have  
 1010 said, do not burden themselves too much with Plot, which has been reproach'd to them by an *ingenious person* of our Nation as a fault, for he says they commonly make but one person considerable in a Play; they dwell on him, and his concernments, while the rest of the persons are only sub-  
 1015 servient to set him off. If he intends this by it, that there is one person in the Play who is of greater dignity than the

1013 on] upon

rest, he must tax, not only theirs, but those of the Ancients, and which he would be loth to do, the best of ours; for 'tis impossible but that one person must be more conspicuous in it than any other, and consequently the greatest share in 1020 the action must devolve on him. We see it so in the management of all affairs; even in the most equal Aristocracy, the ballance cannot be so justly poys'd, but some one will be superiour to the rest; either in parts, fortune, interest, or the consideration of some glorious exploit; which will reduce 1025 the greatest part of business into his hands.

But, if he would have us to imagine that in exalting one character the rest of them are neglected, and that all of them have not some share or other in the action of the Play, I desire him to produce any of *Corneilles* Tragedies, wherein 1030 every person (like so many servants in a well govern'd Family) has not some employment, and who is not necessary to the carrying on of the Plot, or at least to your understanding it.

There are indeed some protatick persons in the Ancients, 1035 whom they make use of in their Plays, either to hear, or give the Relation: but the French avoid this with great address, making their narrations only to, or by such, who are some way interessed in the main design. And now I am speaking of Relations, I cannot take a fitter opportunity to 1040 add this in favour of the French, that they often use them with better judgment and more *a propos* than the English do. Not that I commend narrations in general, but there are two sorts of them; one of those things which are antecedent to the Play, and are related to make the conduct of it more 1045 clear to us, but, 'tis a fault to choose such subjects for the Stage as will force us on that Rock; because we see they are

1027 one] of one  
force us upon that

1047 Stage . . . that] Stage which will in-

seldom listned to by the Audience, and that is many times the ruin of the Play: for, being once let pass without attention, the Audience can never recover themselves to understand the Plot; and indeed it is somewhat unreasonable that they should be put to so much trouble, as, that to comprehend what passes in their sight, they must have recourse to what was done, perhaps, ten or twenty years ago.

But there is another sort of Relations, that is, of things hapning in the Action of the Play, and suppos'd to be done behind the Scenes: and this is many times both convenient and beautiful: for, by it the French avoid the tumult, to which we are subject in *England*, by representing Duells, Battels, and the like; which renders our Stage too like the Theaters where they fight Prizes. For what is more ridiculous than to represent an Army with a Drum and five men behind it; all which, the Heroe of the other side is to drive in before him, or to see a Duel fought, and one slain with two or three thrusts of the foyles, which we know are so blunted, that we might give a man an hour to kill another in good earnest with them.

I have observ'd that in all our Tragedies, the Audience cannot forbear laughing when the Actors are to die; 'tis the most Comick part of the whole Play. All *passions* may be lively represented on the Stage, if to the well-writing of them the Actor supplies a good commanded voice, and limbs that move easily, and without stiffness; but there are many *actions* which can never be imitated to a just height: dying especially is a thing which none but a Roman Gladiator could naturally perform on the Stage when he did not imitate or represent, but do it; and therefore it is better to omit the representation of it.

1058 tumult . . . in] tumult, which we are subject to in  
on] upon 1077 but do] but naturally do

The words of a good Writer which describe it lively, will make a deeper impression of belief in us than all the Actor 1080 can insinuate into us, when he seems to fall dead before us; as a Poet in the description of a beautiful Garden, or a Meadow, will please our imagination more than the place it self can please our sight. When we see death represented we are convinc'd it is but Fiction; but when we hear it related, 1085 our eyes (the strongest witnesses) are wanting, which might have undeceiv'd us; and we are all willing to favour the sleight when the Poet does not too grosly impose on us. They therefore who imagine these relations would make no concernment in the Audience, are deceiv'd, by confounding 1090 them with the other, which are of things antecedent to the Play; those are made often in cold blood (as I may say) to the audience; but these are warm'd with our concernments, which were before awaken'd in the Play. What the Philosophers say of motion, that, when it is once begun, it con- 1095 tinues of it self, and will do so to Eternity without some stop put to it, is clearly true on this occasion; the soul being already mov'd with the Characters and Fortunes of those imaginary persons, continues going of its own accord, and we are no more weary to hear what becomes of them when 1100 they are not on the Stage, than we are to listen to the news of an absent Mistress. But it is objected, That if one part of the Play may be related, then why not all? I answer, Some parts of the action are more fit to be represented, some to be related. *Corneille* says judiciously, that the Poet is not 1105 oblig'd to expose to view all particular actions which conduce to the principal: he ought to select such of them to be seen which will appear with the greatest beauty, either by the magnificence of the show, or the vehemence of passions

1081 can . . . when] can perswade us to, when  
1094 were] are

1088 on] upon

1110 which they produce, or some other charm which they have  
 in them, and let the rest arrive to the audience by narration.  
 'Tis a great mistake in us to believe the French present no  
 part of the action on the Stage: every alteration or crossing  
 of a design, every new sprung passion, and turn of it, is a  
 1115 part of the action, and much the noblest, except we conceive  
 nothing to be action till the Players come to blows; as if the  
 painting of the Heroes mind were not more properly the  
 Poets work than the strength of his body. Nor does this any  
 thing contradict the opinion of *Horace*, where he tells us,

1120           Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem,  
               Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus.—

For he says immediately after,

  Non tamen intus  
               Digna geri promes in scenam, Multaq; tolles  
 1125           Ex oculis, quæ mox narret facundia præsens.

Among which many he recounts some.

          Nec pueros coram populo Medea trucidet,  
           Aut in avem Progne mutetur, Cadmus in anguem, &c.

That is, those actions which by reason of their cruelty will  
 1130 cause aversion in us, or by reason of their impossibility un-  
 belief, ought either wholly to be avoided by a Poet, or only  
 deliver'd by narration. To which, we may have leave to add  
 such as to avoid tumult, (as was before hinted) or to reduce  
 the Plot into a more reasonable compass of time, or for  
 1135 defect of Beauty in them, are rather to be related than pre-  
 sented to the Eye. Examples of all these kinds are frequent,  
 not only among all the Ancients, but in the best receiv'd of  
 our English Poets. We find *Ben. Johnson* using them in his

1113 on] upon

1116 the Players] they

*Magnetick Lady*, where one comes out from Dinner, and relates the quarrels and disorders of it to save the undecent 1140 appearance of them on the Stage, and to abbreviate the Story: and this in express imitation of *Terence*, who had done the same before him in his *Eunuch*, where *Pythias* makes the like relation of what had happen'd within at the Soldiers entertainment. The relations likewise of *Sejanus's* death, and the 1145 prodigies before it are remarkable; the one of which was hid from sight to avoid the horror and tumult of the representation; the other to shun the introducing of things impossible to be believ'd. In that excellent Play the *King and no King*, *Fletcher* goes yet farther; for the whole unravelling of the 1150 Plot is done by narration in the fifth Act, after the manner of the Ancients; and it moves great concernment in the Audience, though it be only a relation of what was done many years before the Play. I could multiply other instances, but these are sufficient to prove that there is no error in choos- 1155 ing a subject which requires this sort of narrations; in the ill-management of them, there may.

But I find I have been too long in this discourse since the French have many other excellencies not common to us; as that you never see any of their Plays end with a conversion, 1160 or simple change of will, which is the ordinary way which our Poets use to end theirs. It shews little art in the conclusion of a Dramatick Poem, when they who have hinder'd the felicity during the four Acts, desist from it in the fifth without some powerful cause to take them off their design; 1165 and though I deny not but such reasons may be found, yet it is a path that is cautiously to be trod, and the Poet is to be sure he convinces the Audience that the motive is strong enough. As for example, the conversion of the Usurer in the

1157 management] managing  
off . . . and] off; and

1161 which our] our 1165

1170 *Scornful Lady*, seems to me a little forc'd; for being an  
 Usurer, which implies a lover of Money to the highest  
 degree of covetousness, (and such the Poet has represented  
 him) the account he gives for the sudden change is, that he  
 has been dup'd by the wild young fellow, which in reason  
 1175 might render him more wary another time, and make him  
 punish himself with harder fare and courser cloaths to get  
 up again what he had lost: but that he should look on it as a  
 Judgment, and so repent, we may expect to hear in a Ser-  
 mon, but I should never indure it in a Play.

1180 I pass by this; neither will I insist on the care they take,  
 that no person after his first entrance shall ever appear, but  
 the business which brings him upon the Stage shall be evid-  
 ent: which rule if observ'd, must needs render all the events  
 in the Play more natural; for there you see the probability  
 1185 of every accident, in the cause that produc'd it; and that  
 which appears chance in the Play, will seem so reasonable  
 to you, that you will there find it almost necessary; so that  
 in the exit of the Actor you have a clear account of his pur-  
 pose and design in the next entrance: (though, if the Scene  
 1190 be well wrought, the event will commonly deceive you) for  
 there is nothing so absurd, says *Corneille*, as for an Actor to  
 leave the Stage, only because he has no more to say.

I should now speak of the beauty of their Rhime, and the  
 just reason I have to prefer that way of writing in Tragedies  
 1195 before ours in Blanck-verse; but because it is partly receiv'd  
 by us, and therefore not altogether peculiar to them, I will  
 say no more of it in relation to their Plays. For our own I  
 doubt not but it will exceedingly beautifie them, and I can  
 see but one reason why it should not generally obtain, that

1176 get . . . but] get it up again: but

1178 hear in] hear of in 1180 on] upon

1188 exit . . . Actor] exits of their Actors

1177 on] upon

1183 rule if] if

1188 his] their

is, because our Poets write so ill in it. This indeed may prove 1200  
 a more prevailing argument than all others which are us'd  
 to destroy it, and therefore I am only troubled when great  
 and judicious Poets, and those who are acknowledg'd such,  
 have writ or spoke against it; as for others they are to be  
 answer'd by that one sentence of an ancient Authour. 1205

Sed ut primo ad consequendos eos quos priores ducimus accen-  
 dimur, ita ubi aut præteriri, aut æquari eos posse desperavimus,  
 studium cum spe senescit: quod, scilicet, assequi non potest, sequi  
 desinit; præteritoque eo in quo eminere non possumus, aliquid  
 in quo nitamur conquerimus. 1210

*Lisideius* concluded in this manner; and *Neander* after a  
 little pause thus answer'd him.

I shall grant *Lisideius*, without much dispute, a great part  
 of what he has urg'd against us; for I acknowledge that the  
 French contrive their Plots more regularly, and observe the 1215  
 Laws of Comedy, and decorum of the Stage (to speak gener-  
 ally) with more exactness than the English. Farther, I deny  
 not but he has tax'd us justly in some irregularities of ours  
 which he has mention'd; yet, after all, I am of opinion that  
 neither our faults nor their virtues are considerable enough 1220  
 to place them above us.

For the lively imitation of Nature being in the definition  
 of a Play, those which best fulfil that law ought to be  
 esteem'd superiour to the others. 'Tis true, those beauties of  
 the French poesie are such as will raise perfection higher 1225  
 where it is, but are not sufficient to give it where it is not:  
 they are indeed the Beauties of a Statue, but not of a Man,  
 because not animated with the Soul of Poesie, which is  
 imitation of humour and passions: and this *Lisideius* himself,  
 or any other, however byassed to their Party, cannot but 1230

acknowledge, if he will either compare the humours of our Comedies, or the Characters of our serious Plays with theirs. He who will look upon theirs which have been written till these last ten years or thereabouts, will find it an hard matter  
 1235 to pick out two or three passable humours amongst them. *Corneille* himself, their Arch-Poet, what has he produc'd except the *Lier*, and you know how it was cry'd up in *France*; but when it came upon the English Stage, though well translated, and that part of *Dorant* acted to so much advantage  
 1240 as I am confident it never receiv'd in its own Country, the most favourable to it would not put it in competition with many of *Fletchers* or *Ben. Johnsons*. In the rest of *Corneilles* Comedies you have little humour; he tells you himself his way is first to shew two Lovers in good intellig-  
 1245 ence with each other; in the working up of the Play to embroyl them by some mistake, and in the latter end to clear it, and reconcile them.

But of late years *Moliere*, the younger *Corneille*, *Quinault*, and some others, have been imitating afar off the quick turns  
 1250 and graces of the English Stage. They have mix'd their serious Plays with mirth, like our Tragicomedies since the death of Cardinal *Richlieu*, which *Lisideius* and many others not observing, have commended that in them for a virtue which they themselves no longer practise. Most of their  
 1255 new Plays are like some of ours, deriv'd from the Spanish Novells. There is scarce one of them without a veil, and a trusty *Diego*, who drolls much after the rate of the *Adventures*. But their humours, If I may grace them with that name, are so thin sown that never above one of them comes

1232 Characters of our 1668] Characters our 1684 1233 who]  
 that 1239 advantage as] advantage by Mr. Hart, as 1241 put  
 it in] put in 1247 clear . . . them.] clear it up. 1248  
*Moliere,* de *Moliere*, 1249 afar] of afar

up in any Play: I dare take upon me to find more variety of 1260  
 them in some one Play of *Ben. Johnsons* than in all theirs  
 together: as he who has seen the *Alchymist*, the *Silent Woman*,  
 or *Bartholmew-Fair*, cannot but acknowledge with me.

I grant the French have performed what was possible on  
 the ground-work of the Spanish Plays; what was pleasant 1265  
 before, they have made regular; but there is not above one  
 good Play to be writ on all those Plots; they are too much  
 alike to please often, which we need not the experience of  
 our own Stage to justifie. As for their new way of mingling  
 mirth with serious Plot, I do not with *Lysideius* condemn 1270  
 the thing, though I cannot approve their manner of doing  
 it: He tells us we cannot so speedily recollect our selves after  
 a Scene of great passion and concernment, as to pass to  
 another of mirth and humour, and to enjoy it with any  
 relish: but why should he imagine the soul of man more 1275  
 heavy than his Senses? Does not the eye pass from an un-  
 pleasant object to a pleasant in a much shorter time than is  
 requir'd to this? and does not the unpleasantness of the first  
 commend the beauty of the latter? The old Rule of Logick  
 might have convinc'd him, that contraries when plac'd near, 1280  
 set off each other. A continued gravity keeps the spirit too  
 much bent; we must refresh it sometimes, as we bait in a  
 journey, that we may go on with greater ease. A Scene of  
 mirth mix'd with Tragedy has the same effect upon us which  
 our musick has betwixt the Acts, which we find a relief to 1285  
 us from the best Plots and language of the Stage, if the  
 discourses have been long. I must therefore have stronger  
 arguments ere I am convinc'd, that compassion and mirth  
 in the same subject destroy each other, and in the mean

1267 on] upon  
 Acts, and that we

1282 in] upon

1285 Acts, . . . we]

time cannot but conclude, to the honour of our Nation, that we have invented, increas'd and perfected a more pleasant way of writing for the Stage than was ever known to the Ancients or Moderns of any Nation, which is Tragicomedie.

And this leads me to wonder why *Lisideius* and many others should cry up the barrenness of the French Plots above the variety and copiousness of the English. Their Plots are single, they carry on one design which is push'd forward by all the Actors, every Scene in the Play contributing and moving towards it: Our Plays besides the main design, have under-plots or by-concernments, of less considerable Persons, and Intrigues, which are carried on with the motion of the main Plot: as they say the Orb of the fix'd Stars, and those of the Planets, though they have motions of their own, are whirl'd about by the motion of the *primum mobile*, in which they are contain'd: that similitude expresses much of the English Stage: for if contrary motions may be found in Nature to agree; if a Planet can go East and West at the same time; one way by virtue of his own motion, the other by the force of the first mover; it will not be difficult to imagine how the under-plot, which is only different, not contrary to the great design, may naturally be conducted along with it.

*Eugenius* has already shewn us, from the confession of the French Poets, that the Unity of Action is sufficiently pre-serv'd if all the imperfect actions of the Play are conducing to the main design: but when those petty intrigues of a Play are so ill order'd, that they have no coherence with the other, I must grant that *Lisideius* has reason to tax that want of due connexion; for Co-ordination in a Play is as dangerous and

1299 Our Plays] Ours,  
that] grant

1302 as] ust as

1318 grant

unnatural as in a State. In the mean time he must acknowledge our variety, if well order'd, will afford a greater pleasure to the audience. 1320

As for his other argument, that by pursuing one single Theme they gain an advantage to express and work up the passions, I wish any example he could bring from them 1325 would make it good: for I confess their verses are to me the coldest I have ever read: Neither indeed is it possible for them, in the way they take, so to express passion, as that the effects of it should appear in the concernment of an Audience, their Speeches being so many declamations, 1330 which tire us with the length; so that instead of perswading us to grieve for their imaginary Heroes, we are concern'd for our own trouble, as we are in tedious visits of bad company; we are in pain till they are gone. When the French Stage came to be reform'd by Cardinal *Richelieu*, those long 1335 Harangues were introduc'd, to comply with the gravity of a Churchman. Look upon the *Cinna* and the *Pompey*, they are not so properly to be called Plays, as long discourses of reason of State: and *Polieucte* in matters of Religion is as solemn as the long stops upon our Organs. Since that time it is 1340 grown into a custome, and their Actors speak by the Hour-glass, like our Parsons; nay, they account it the grace of their parts, and think themselves disparag'd by the Poet, if they may not twice or thrice in a Play entertain the Audience with a Speech of an hundred lines. I deny not but this may 1345 sute well enough with the French; for as we, who are a more sullen people, come to be diverted at our Plays; so they who are of an aiery and gay temper come thither to make themselves more serious: And this I conceive to be one reason

1333 in tedious] in the tedious 1342 -glass, . . . nay,] -glass,  
as our Parsons do; nay, 1345 hundred lines.] hundred or two  
hundred lines. 1347 so they] they

1350 why Comedy's are more pleasing to us, and Tragedies to  
 them. But to speak generally, it cannot be deny'd that short  
 Speeches and Replies are more apt to move the passions,  
 and beget concernment in us than the other: for it is un-  
 1355 natural for any one in a gust of Passion to speak long to-  
 gether, or for another in the same condition, to suffer him,  
 without interruption. Grief and Passion are like floods  
 rais'd in little Brooks by a sudden rain; they are quickly up,  
 and if the concernment be pour'd unexpectedly in upon us,  
 it overflows us: But a long sober shower gives them leisure  
 1360 to run out as they came in, without troubling the ordinary  
 current. As for Comedy, Repartee is one of its chiefest graces;  
 the greatest pleasure of the Audience is a chase of wit kept  
 up on both sides, and swiftly manag'd. And this our fore-  
 fathers, if not we, have had in *Fletchers* Plays, to a much  
 1365 higher degree of perfection than the French Poets can,  
 reasonably, hope to reach.

There is another part of *Lisideius* his Discourse, in which  
 he has rather excus'd our neighbours than commended them;  
 that is, for aiming only to make one person considerable in  
 1370 their Plays. 'Tis very true what he has urged, that one  
 character in all Plays, even without the Poets care, will have  
 advantage of all the others; and that the design of the whole  
*Drama* will chiefly depend on it. But this hinders not that  
 there may be more shining characters in the Play: many  
 1375 persons of a second magnitude, nay, some so very near, so  
 almost equal to the first, that greatness may be oppos'd to  
 greatness, and all the persons be made considerable, not  
 only by their quality, but their action. 'Tis evident that the  
 more the persons are, the greater will be the variety of the  
 1380 Plot. If then the parts are manag'd so regularly that the

1350 Comedy's are more] Comedy is more  
 reach.] can arrive at.

1365 can, . . .

beauty of the whole be kept intire, and that the variety become not a perplex'd and confus'd mass of accidents, you will find it infinitely pleasing to be led in a labyrinth of design, where you see some of your way before you, yet discern not the end till you arrive at it. And that all this is 1385 practicable, I can produce for examples many of our English Plays: as the *Maids Tragedy*, the *Alchymist*, the *Silent Woman*: I was going to have named the *Fox*, but that the unity of design seems not exactly observ'd in it; for there appear two actions in the Play; the first naturally ending 1390 with the fourth Act; the second forc'd from it in the fifth: which yet is the less to be condemn'd in him, because the disguise of *Volpone*, though it suited not with his character as a crafty or covetous person, agreed well enough with that of a voluptuary: and by it the Poet gain'd the end 1395 at which he aym'd, the punishment of Vice, and the reward of Virtue, both which that disguise produc'd. So that to judge equally of it, it was an excellent fifth Act, but not so naturally proceeding from the former.

But to leave this, and pass to the latter part of *Lisideius* his 1400 discourse, which concerns relations, I must acknowledge with him, that the French have reason to hide that part of the action which would occasion too much tumult on the Stage, and to choose rather to have it made known by narration to the Audience. Farther I think it very convenient, 1405 for the reasons he has given, that all incredible actions were remov'd; but, whither custome has so insinuated it self into our Country-men, or nature has so form'd them to fierceness, I know not; but they will scarcely suffer combats and other objects of horreur to be taken from them. And indeed, 1410

1390 appear] appears      1395 end . . . the] end he aym'd at, the  
 1397 both which] which      1402 to hide] when they hide      1403  
 on] upon      1404 to choose] choose

the indecency of tumults is all which can be objected against fighting: For why may not our imagination as well suffer it self to be deluded with the probability of it, as with any other thing in the Play? For my part, I can with as great  
 1415 ease perswade my self that the blows are given in good earnest, as I can, that they who strike them are Kings or Princes, or those persons which they represent. For objects of incredibility I would be satisfied from *Lisideius*, whether we have any so remov'd from all appearance of truth as are  
 1420 those of *Corneilles Andromede*? A Play which has been frequented the most of any he has writ? If the *Perseus*, or the Son of an Heathen God, the *Pegasus* and the Monster were not capable to choak a strong belief, let him blame any representation of ours hereafter. Those indeed were objects  
 1425 of delight; yet the reason is the same as to the probability: for he makes it not a Ballette or Masque, but a Play, which is to resemble truth. But for death, that it ought not to be represented, I have besides the Arguments alledg'd by *Lisideius*, the authority of *Ben. Johnson*, who has forborn it  
 1430 in his Tragedies; for both the death of *Sejanus* and *Catiline* are related: though in the latter I cannot but observe one irregularity of that great Poet: he has remov'd the Scene in the same Act, from *Rome* to *Catiline's Army*, and from thence again to *Rome*; and besides, has allow'd a very incon-  
 1435 siderable time, after *Catiline's Speech*, for the striking of the battle, and the return of *Petreius*, who is to relate the event of it to the Senate: which I should not animadvert on him, who was otherwise a painful observer of τὸ πρέπον, or the *decorum* of the Stage, if he had not us'd extream severity in his  
 1440 judgment on the incomparable *Shakespeare* for the same fault. To conclude on this subject of Relations, if we are to

1415 blows are] blowes which are struck are  
 1440 on] upon

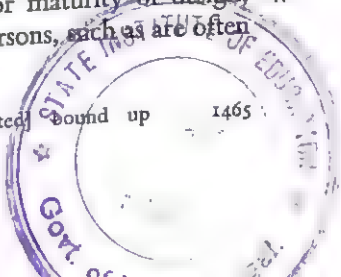
1437 on] upon

be blam'd for shewing too much of the action, the French are as faulty for discovering too little of it: a mean betwixt both should be observed by every judicious Writer, so as the audience may neither be left unsatisfied by not seeing what 1445 is beautiful, or shock'd by beholding what is either incredible or undecent. I hope I have already prov'd in this discourse, that though we are not altogether so punctual as the French, in observing the Laws of Comedy; yet our errors are so few, and little, and those things wherein we excel them 1450 so considerable, that we ought of right to be prefer'd before them. But what will *Lisideius* say if they themselves acknowledge they are too strictly bounded by those Laws, for breaking which he has blam'd the English? I will alledge *Corneille's* words, as I find them in the end of his Discourse 1455 of the three Unities; *Il est facile aux speculatifs d'estre severes, &c.* 'Tis easie for speculative persons to judge severely; 'but if they would produce to publick view ten or twelve 'pieces of this nature, they would perhaps give more latitude 'to the Rules than I have done, when by experience they had 1460 'known how much we are limited and constrain'd by them, 'and how many beauties of the Stage they banish'd from it.' To illustrate a little what he has said; By their servile observations of the unities of time and place, and integrity of Scenes, they have brought on themselves that dearth of 1465 Plot, and narrowness of Imagination, which may be observ'd in all their Plays. How many beautiful accidents might naturally happen in two or three days, which cannot arrive with any probability in the compass of 24 hours? There is time to be allowed also for maturity of design, 1470 which amongst great and prudent persons, such as are often

1453 bounded] ti'd up  
on] upon

1461 limited] bound up

1465



represented in Tragedy, cannot, with any likelihood of truth, be brought to pass at so short a warning. Farther, by tying themselves strictly to the unity of place, and un-  
 1475 broken Scenes, they are forc'd many times to omit some beauties which cannot be shewn where the Act began; but might, if the Scene were interrupted, and the Stage clear'd for the persons to enter in another place; and therefore the French Poets are often forc'd upon absurdities: for if the  
 1480 Act begins in a Chamber, all the persons in the Play must have some business or other to come thither, or else they are not to be shewn that Act, and sometimes their characters are very unfitting to appear there; As, suppose it were the Kings Bed-chamber, yet the meanest man in the Tragedy  
 1485 must come and dispatch his business there, rather than in the Lobby or Court-yard, (which is fitter for him) for fear the Stage should be clear'd, and the Scenes broken. Many times they fall by it into a greater inconvenience; for they keep their Scenes unbroken, and yet change the place; as in one  
 1490 of their newest Plays, where the Act begins in the Street. There a Gentleman is to meet his Friend; he sees him with his man, coming out from his Fathers house; they talk together, and the first goes out: the second, who is a Lover, has made an appointment with his Mistress; she appears at  
 1495 the window, and then we are to imagine the Scene lies under it. This Gentleman is call'd away, and leaves his servant with his Mistress: presently her Father is heard from within; the young Lady is affraid the Serving-man should be discover'd, and thrusts him into a place of safety, which is suppos'd to  
 1500 be her Closet. After this, the Father enters to the Daughter, and now the Scene is in a House: for he is seeking from one room to another for this poor *Philipin*, or French *Diego*, who

1499 him . . . which] him in through a door which

is heard from within, drolling and breaking many a miserable conceit on the subject of his sad condition. In this ridiculous manner the Play goes forward, the Stage being never empty all the while: so that the Street, the Window, the two Houses, and the Closet, are made to walk about, and the Persons to stand still. Now what I beseech you is more easie than to write a regular French Play, or more difficult than to write an irregular English one, like those of *Fletcher*, or of *Shakespeare*? 1505

If they content themselves as *Corneille* did, with some flat design, which, like an ill Riddle, is found out e're it be half propos'd; such Plots we can make every way regular as easily as they: but when e're they endeavour to rise to any quick turns and counterturns of Plot, as some of them have attempted, since *Corneille's* Plays have been less in vogue, you see they write as irregularly as we, though they cover it more speciously. Hence the reason is perspicuous, why no French Plays, when translated, have, or ever can succeed on the English Stage. For, if you consider the Plots, our own are fuller of variety; if the writing, ours are more quick and fuller of spirit: and therefore 'tis a strange mistake in those who decry the way of writing Plays in Verse, as if the English therein imitated the French. We have borrowed nothing from them; our Plots are weav'd in English Looms: we endeavour therein to follow the variety and greatness of characters which are deriv'd to us from *Shakespeare* and *Fletcher*: the copiousness and well-knitting of the intrigues we have from *Johnson*, and for the Verse it self we have English Presidents of elder date than any of *Corneille's* Plays: (not to name our old Comedies before *Shakespeare*, which were all writ in verse of six feet, or *Alexandrins*, such as the 1520

1504 conceit . . . his] conceit upon his 1505 forward,] on,  
1515 rise to] rise up to 1520 on] upon

French now use) I can shew in *Shakespeare*, many Scenes of  
 1535 rhyme together, and the like in *Ben. Johnsons* Tragedies: In  
*Catiline* and *Sejanus* sometimes thirty or forty lines; I mean  
 besides the Chorus, or the Monologues, which by the way,  
 shew'd *Ben.* no enemy to this way of writing, especially if  
 you read his *Sad Shepherd*, which goes sometimes on rhyme,  
 1540 sometimes on blank Verse, like an Horse who eases himself  
 on Trot and Amble. You find him likewise commending  
*Fletcher's* Pastoral of the *Faithful Shepherdess*; which is for  
 the most part Rhyme, though not refin'd to that purity  
 to which it hath since been brought: And these examples  
 1545 are enough to clear us from a servile imitation of the  
 French.

But to return whence I have digress'd, I dare boldly affirm  
 these two things of the English *Drama*: First, That we have  
 many Plays of ours as regular as any of theirs; and which,  
 1550 besides, have more variety of Plot and Characters: And  
 secondly, that in most of the irregular Plays of *Shakespeare*  
 or *Fletcher*, (for *Ben. Johnson's* are for the most part regular)  
 there is a more masculine fancy and greater spirit in the  
 writing, than there is in any of the French. I could produce  
 1555 even in *Shakespeare's* and *Fletcher's* Works, some Plays which  
 are almost exactly form'd; as the *Merry Wives of Windsor*,  
 and the *Scornful Lady*: but because (generally speaking)  
*Shakespeare*, who writ first, did not perfectly observe the  
 Laws of Comedy, and *Fletcher*, who came nearer to per-  
 1560 fection, yet through carelessness made many faults; I will  
 take the pattern of a perfect Play from *Ben. Johnson*, who  
 was a careful and learned Observer of the Dramatique Laws,  
 and from all his Comedies I shall select *The Silent Woman*;

1539 read] look upon

1541 on] upon

in all the

1539 on] upon

1547 whence] from whence

1540 on] upon

1553 in the]

of which I will make a short Examen, according to those Rules which the French observe. 1565

As *Neander* was beginning to examine *The Silent Woman*, *Eugenius*, earnestly regarding him; I beseech you, *Neander*, said he, gratifie the company and me in particular so far, as before you speak of the Play, to give us a Character of the Author; and tell us frankly your opinion, whether you do 1570 not think all Writers, both French and English, ought to give place to him?

I fear, replied *Neander*, That in obeying your Commands I shall draw some envy on my self. Besides, in performing them, it will be first necessary to speak somewhat of 1575 *Shakespeare* and *Fletcher*, his Rivals in Poesie; and one of them, in my opinion, at least his equal, perhaps his superiour.

To begin with *Shakespeare*; he was the Man who of all Modern, and perhaps Ancient Poets, had the largest and most comprehensive Soul. All the Images of Nature were 1580 still present to him, and he drew them not laboriously, but luckily: when he describes any thing, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation: he was naturally learn'd; he needed not the Spectacles of Books to read 1585 Nature; he look'd inwards, and found her there. I cannot say he is every where alike; were he so, I should do him injury to compare him with the greatest of Mankind. He is many times flat, insipid; his Comick Wit degenerating into Clenches, his serious Swelling into Bombast. But he is always 1590 great, when some great occasion is presented to him: no Man can say he ever had a fit subject for his Wit, and did not then raise himself as high above the rest of Poets,

1567 *Eugenius*, . . . him;] *Eugenius*, looking earnestly upon him;  
1574 some envy upon] a little envy upon

Quantum lenta solent, inter viburna cupressi.

1595 The consideration of this made Mr. *Hales* of *Eaton* say,  
That there was no subject of which any Poet ever writ, but  
he would produce it much better done in *Shakespeare*; and  
however others are now generally preferr'd before him,  
yet the Age wherein he liv'd, which had Contemporaries  
1600 with him, *Fletcher* and *Johnson* never equall'd them to him in  
their esteem: And in the last Kings Court, when *Ben's* re-  
putation was at highest, Sir *John Suckling*, and with him the  
greater part of the Courtiers, set our *Shakespeare* far above  
him.

1605 *Beaumont* and *Fletcher* of whom I am next to speak, had  
with the advantage of *Shakespeare's* Wit, which was their  
precedent, great natural gifts, improv'd by study. *Beaumont*  
especially being so accurate a Judge of Plays, that *Ben. John-*  
*son* while he liv'd, submitted all his Writings to his Censure,  
1610 and 'tis thought, us'd his Judgment in correcting, if not  
contriving all his Plots. What value he had for him, appears  
by the Verses he writ to him; and therefore I need speak no  
farther of it. The first Play that brought *Fletcher* and him  
in esteem was their *Philaster*: for before that, they had writ-  
1615 ten two or three very unsuccessfully: as the like is reported  
of *Ben. Johnson*, before he writ *Every Man in his Humour*.  
Their Plots were generally more regular than *Shakespeare's*,  
especially those which were made before *Beaumont's* death;  
and they understood and imitated the Conversation of  
1620 Gentlemen much better; whose wild debaucheries, and  
quickness of wit in reparties, no Poet before them, could  
paint as they have done. Humour which *Ben. Johnson*  
deriv'd from particular persons, they made it not their

1597 done] treated of 1617 regular 1668] regularly 1684  
1621 Poet . . . paint] Poet can ever paint 1622 Humour which]  
This Humour of which

business to describe: they represented all the passions very lively, but above all, Love. I am apt to believe the English Language in them arriv'd to its highest perfection; what words have since been taken in, are rather superfluous than ornamental. Their Plays are now the most pleasant and frequent entertainments of the Stage; two of theirs being acted through the year for one of *Shakespeare's* or *Johnson's*: the reason is, because there is a certain gayety in their Comedies, and Pathos in their more serious Plays, which suits generally with all mens humours. *Shakespeare's* Language is likewise a little obsolete, and *Ben. Johnson's* Wit comes short of theirs.

As for *Johnson*, to whose Character I am now arriv'd, if we look upon him while he was himself, (for his last Plays were but his dotages) I think him the most learned and judicious Writer which any Theater ever had. He was a most severe Judge of himself as well as others. One cannot say he wanted wit, but rather that he was frugal of it. In his Works you find little to retrench or alter. Wit and Language, and Humour also in some measure we had before him; but something of Art was wanting to the *Drama* till he came. He manag'd his strength to more advantage than any who preceded him. You seldom find him making Love in any of his Scenes, or endeavouring to move the Passions; his Genius was too sullen and saturnine to do it gracefully, especially when he knew he came after those who had performed both to such an height. Humour was his proper Sphere, and in that he delighted most to represent Mechanick people. He was deeply conversant in the Ancients, both Greek and Latine, and he borrow'd boldly from them: there is scarce a Poet or Historian among the Roman Authors of

1655 those times whom he has not translated in *Sejanus* and  
*Catiline*. But he has done his Robberies so openly, that one  
 may see he fears not to be taxed by any Law. He invades  
 Authors like a Monarch, and what would be theft in other  
 Poets, is only victory in him. With the spoils of these  
 1660 Writers he so represents old *Rome* to us, in its Rites, Cere-  
 monies and Customs, that if one of their Poets had written  
 either of his Tragedies, we had seen less of it than in him.  
 If there was any fault in his Language, 'twas that he weav'd  
 it too closely and laboriously, in his Comedies especially:  
 1665 perhaps too, he did a little too much Romanize our Tongue,  
 leaving the words which he translated almost as much Latine  
 as he found them: wherein though he learnedly followed  
 their Language, he did not enough comply with the Idiom  
 of ours. If I would compare him with *Shakespeare*, I must  
 1670 acknowledge him the more correct Poet, but *Shakespeare*  
 the greater Wit. *Shakespeare* was the *Homer*, or Father of our  
 Dramatick Poets; *Johnson* was the *Virgil*, the pattern of  
 elaborate Writing; I admire him, but I love *Shakespeare*.  
 To conclude of him, as he has given us the most correct  
 1675 Plays, so in the precepts which he has laid down in his  
*Discoveries*, we have as many and profitable Rules for per-  
 fecting the Stage as any wherewith the French can furnish us.  
 Having thus spoken of the Author, I proceed to the exam-  
 ination of his Comedy, *The Silent Woman*.

1680

## EXAMEN OF THE SILENT WOMAN

To begin first with the length of the Action, it is so far  
 from exceeding the compass of a Natural day, that it takes  
 not up an Artificial one. 'Tis all included in the limits of

1664 his...perhaps] his serious Playes: perhaps 1665 too much]  
 to much 1667 followed their] followed the Idiom of their  
 1668 with... If] with ours. If

three hours and an half, which is no more than is requir'd for the presentment on the Stage. A beauty perhaps not <sup>1685</sup> much observed; if it had, we should not have look'd on the Spanish Translation of *Five Hours* with so much wonder. The Scene of it is laid in *London*; the latitude of place is almost as little as you can imagine: for it lies all within the compass of two Houses, and after the first Act, in one. The <sup>1690</sup> continuity of Scenes is observ'd more than in any of our Plays, except his own *Fox* and *Alchymist*. They are not broken above twice or thrice at most in the whole Comedy, and in the two best of *Corneille's* Plays, the *Cid* and *Cinna*, they are interrupted once. The action of the Play is intirely <sup>1695</sup> one; the end or aim of which is the settling *Moroses's* Estate on *Dauphine*. The Intrigue of it is the greatest and most noble of any pure unmix'd Comedy in any Language: you see in it many persons of various characters and humours, and all delightful: As first, *Morose*, or an old Man, to whom all <sup>1700</sup> noise but his own talking is offensive. Some who would be thought Criticks, say this humour of his is forc'd: but to remove that objection, we may consider him first to be naturally of a delicate hearing, as many are to whom all sharp sounds are unpleasant; and secondly, we may attribute <sup>1705</sup> much of it to the peevishness of his Age, or the wayward authority of an old Man in his own house, where he may make himself obeyed; and to this the Poet seems to allude in his name *Morose*. Beside this, I am assur'd from divers persons, that *Ben. Johnson* was actually acquainted with such <sup>1710</sup> a man, one altogether as ridiculous as he is here represented. Others say it is not enough to find one man of such an humour; it must be common to more, and the more com-

1686 on] upon 1692 except] excepting 1695 once.]  
 once apiece. 1708 and . . . in] and this the Poet seems to allude to  
 in

mon the more natural. To prove this, they instance in the  
 1715 best of Comical Characters, *Falstaffe*: There are many men  
 resembling him; Old, Fat, Merry, Cowardly, Drunken,  
 Amorous, Vain, and Lying: But to convince these people, I  
 need but tell them, that humour is the ridiculous extravag-  
 1720 ance of conversation, wherein one man differs from all  
 others. If then it be common, or communicated to many,  
 how differs it from other mens? or what indeed causes it to  
 be ridiculous so much as the singularity of it? As for *Falstaffe*,  
 he is not properly one humour, but a Miscellany of Humours  
 or Images, drawn from so many several men; that wherein  
 1725 he is singular is his wit, or those things he says, *præter*  
*expectatum*, unexpected by the Audience; his quick evasions  
 when you imagine him surpriz'd, which as they are ex-  
 tremely diverting of themselves, so receive a great addition  
 from his person; for the very sight of such an unweildy old  
 1730 debauch'd Fellow is a Comedy alone. And here having a  
 place so proper for it, I cannot but enlarge somewhat upon  
 this subject of humour into which I am fallen. The Ancients  
 had little of it in their Comedies; for the τὸ γελοῖον, of the  
 old Comedy, of which *Aristophanes* was chief, was not so  
 1735 much to imitate a man, as to make the people laugh at some  
 odd conceit, which had commonly somewhat of unnatural  
 or obscene in it. Thus when you see *Socrates* brought upon  
 the Stage you are not to imagine him made ridiculous by the  
 imitation of his actions, but rather by making him perform  
 1740 something very unlike himself: something so childish and  
 absurd, as by comparing it with the gravity of the true  
*Socrates*, makes a ridiculous object for the Spectators. In their  
 new Comedy which succeeded, the Poets sought indeed to  
 express the ἥθος, as in their Tragedies the πάθος of Mankind.

1725 is his] in his

But this *ἦθος* contain'd only the general Characters of Men 1745  
 and Manners; as Old Men, Lovers, Servingmen, Courti-  
 zans, Parasites, and such other persons as we see in their  
 Comedies; all which they made alike: that is, one Old Man  
 or Father; one Lover, one Courtizan so like another, as if the  
 first of them had begot the rest of every sort: *Ex homine hunc* 1750  
*natum dicas*. The same custom they observ'd likewise in their  
 Tragedies. As for the *French*, though they have the word  
*humeur* among them, yet they have small use of it in their  
 Comedies, or Farces; they being but ill imitations of the  
*ridiculum*, or that which stirr'd up laughter in the old 1755  
 Comedy. But among the *English* 'tis otherwise: where by  
 humour is meant some extravagant habit, passion, or affec-  
 tion; particular (as I said before) to some one person: by the  
 oddness of which, he is immediately distinguish'd from the  
 rest of men; which being lively and naturally represented, 1760  
 most frequently begets that malicious pleasure in the Audi-  
 ence which is testified by laughter: as all things which are  
 deviations from customs are ever the aptest to produce it:  
 though by the way this laughter is only accidental, as the per-  
 son represented is Fantastick or Bizarre; but pleasure is essential 1765  
 to it, as the imitation of what is natural. The description of  
 these humours, drawn from the knowledge and observation  
 of particular persons, was the peculiar genius and talent of  
*Ben. Johnson*; To whose Play I now return.

Besides *Morose*, there are at least nine or ten different 1770  
 Characters and humours in the *Silent Woman*, all which  
 persons have several concernments of their own, yet are all  
 us'd by the Poet, to the conducting of the main design to  
 perfection. I shall not waste time in commending the writing  
 of this Play, but I will give you my opinion, that there is 1775

more wit and acuteness of Fancy in it than in any of *Ben. Johnson's*. Besides, that he has here describ'd the Conversation of Gentlemen in the persons of *True-Wit*, and his Friends, with more gayety, air and freedom, than in the rest  
 1780 of his Comedies. For the contrivance of the Plot, 'tis extream elaborate, and yet withal easie; for the λύσις, or untying of it, 'tis so admirable, that when it is done, no one of the Audience would think the Poet could have miss'd it; and yet it was conceal'd so much before the last Scene, that any  
 1785 other way would sooner have enter'd into your thoughts. But I dare not take upon me to commend the Fabrick of it, because it is altogether so full of Art, that I must unravel every Scene in it to commend it as I ought. And this excellent contrivance is still the more to be admir'd, because  
 1790 'tis Comedy where the persons are only of common rank, and their business private, not elevated by passions or high concernments as in serious Plays. Here every one is a proper Judge of all he sees; nothing is represented but that with which he daily converses: so that by consequence all faults  
 1795 lie open to discovery, and few are pardonable. 'Tis this which *Horace* has judiciously observ'd:

Creditur ex medio quia res arcessit habere  
 Sudoris minimum, sed habet Comedia tanto  
 Plus oneris, quanto veniæ minus.—

1800 But our Poet, who was not ignorant of these difficulties, has made use of all advantages; as he who designs a large leap takes his rise from the highest ground. One of these advantages is that which *Corneille* has laid down as the greatest which can arrive to any Poem, and which he him-

1781 λύσις] δέσις  
 prevail'd himself of

1800 difficulties, . . . of] difficulties, had

self could never compass above thrice in all his Plays, viz. 1805  
the making choice of some signal and long-expected day,  
whereon the action of the Play is to depend. This day was  
that design'd by *Dauphine* for the settling of his Uncles Estate  
upon him; which to compass he contrives to marry him:  
That the marriage had been plotted by him long before- 1810  
hand is made evident by what he tells *True-Wit* in the  
second Act, that in one moment he had destroy'd what he  
had been raising many months.

There is another artifice of the Poet, which I cannot here  
omit, because by the frequent practice of it in his Comedies, 1815  
he has left it to us almost as a Rule, that is, when he has any  
Character or humour wherein he would shew a *Coup de*  
*Maistre*, or his highest skill; he recommends it to your  
observation by a pleasant description of it before the person  
first appears. Thus, in *Bartholomew-Fair* he gives you the 1820  
Pictures of *Numps* and *Cokes*, and in this those of *Daw*,  
*Lafoole*, *Morose*, and the *Collegiate Ladies*; all which you hear  
describ'd before you see them. So that before they come  
upon the Stage you have a longing expectation of them,  
which prepares you to receive them favourably; and when 1825  
they are there, even from their first appearance you are so  
far acquainted with them, that nothing of their humour is  
lost to you.

I will observe yet one thing further of this admirable  
Plot; the business of it rises in every Act. The second is 1830  
greater than the first; the third than the second, and so for-  
ward to the fifth. There too you see, till the very last Scene,  
new difficulties arising to obstruct the action of the Play;  
and when the Audience is brought into despair that the  
business can naturally be effected, then, and not before, the 1835  
discovery is made. But that the Poet might entertain you  
with more variety all this while, he reserves some new

Characters to show you, which he opens not till the second and third Act. In the second *Morose, Daw, the Barber* and  
 1840 *Otter*; in the third the *Collegiat Ladies*: All which he moves afterwards in by-walks, or under Plots, as diversions to the main design, lest it should grow tedious, though they are still naturally joyn'd with it, and somewhere or other subservient to it. Thus, like a skilful Chess-player, by little and  
 1845 little he draws out his men, and makes his pawns of use to his greater persons.

If this Comedy, and some others of his, were translated into French Prose (which would now be no wonder to them, since *Moliere* has lately given them Plays out of Verse which  
 1850 have not displeas'd them) I believe the controversie would soon be decided betwixt the two Nations, even making them the Judges. But we need not call our Hero's to our aid; Be it spoken to the honour of the English, our Nation can never want in any Age such who are able to dispute the  
 1855 Empire of Wit with any people in the Universe. And though the fury of a Civil War, and Power, for twenty years together, abandon'd to a barbarous race of men, Enemies of all good Learning, had buried the Muses under the ruines of Monarchy; yet with the restoration of our happiness, we see  
 1860 reviv'd Poesie lifting up its head, and already shaking off the rubbish which lay so heavy on it. We have seen since his Majesties return, many Dramatick Poems which yield not to those of any forreign Nation, and which deserve all Lawrels but the English. I will set aside Flattery and Envy:  
 1865 it cannot be deny'd but we have had some little blemish either in the Plot or writing of all those Plays which have been made within these seven years: (and perhaps there is no Nation in the world so quick to discern them, or so

difficult to pardon them, as ours:) yet if we can perswade our selves to use the candour of that Poet, who (though the most severe of Criticks) has left us this caution by which to moderate our censures;

—Ubi plura nitent in carmine non ego paucis offendar maculis.

If in consideration of their many and great beauties, we can wink at some slight, and little imperfections; if we, I say, can be thus equal to our selves, I ask no favour from the French. And if I do not venture upon any particular judgment of our late Plays, 'tis out of the consideration which an Ancient Writer gives me; *Vivorum, ut magna admiratio, ita censura difficilis*: betwixt the extreams of admiration and malice, 'tis hard to judge uprightly of the living. Only I think it may be permitted me to say, that as it is no less'ning to us to yeild to some Plays, and those not many of our own Nation in the last Age, so can it be no addition to pronounce of our present Poets that they have far surpass'd all the Ancients, and the Modern Writers of other Countreys.

This, was the substance of what was then spoke on that occasion; and *Lisideius*, I think was going to reply, when he was prevented thus by *Crites*: I am confident, said he, that the most material things that can be said, have been already urg'd on either side; if they have not, I must beg of *Lisideius* that he will defer his answer till another time: for I confess I have a joynt quarrel to you both, because you have concluded, without any reason given for it, that Rhyme is proper for the Stage. I will not dispute how ancient it hath been among us to write this way; perhaps our Ancestours knew no better till *Shakespeare's* time. I will grant it was not altogether left by him, and that *Fletcher* and *Ben. Johnson* us'd it

1881 uprightly 1668] upright 1684  
Lord, was 1889 that the] the

1887 This, was] This, my

frequently in their Pastorals, and sometimes in other Plays.  
 1900 Farther, I will not argue whether we receiv'd it originally  
 from our own Countrymen, or from the French; for that is  
 an inquiry of as little benefit, as theirs who in the midst of  
 the late Plague were not so solicitous to provide against it,  
 as to know whether we had it from the malignity of our  
 1905 own air, or by transportation from *Holland*. I have therefore  
 only to affirm, that it is not allowable in serious Plays; for  
 Comedies I find you already concluding with me. To prove  
 this, I might satisfie my self to tell you, how much in vain  
 it is for you to strive against the stream of the peoples inclin-  
 1910 ation; the greatest part of which are prepossess'd so much  
 with those excellent Plays of *Shakespeare*, *Fletcher*, and *Ben.*  
*Johnson*, (which have been written out of Rhyme) that ex-  
 cept you could bring them such as were written better in it,  
 and those too by persons of equal reputation with them, it  
 1915 will be impossible for you to gain your cause with them,  
 who will still be judges. This it is to which in fine all your  
 reasons must submit. The unanimous consent of an Audi-  
 ence is so powerful, That even *Julius Cesar* (as *Macrobius*  
 reports of him) when he was perpetual Dictator, was not  
 1920 able to ballance it on the other side. But when *Laberius*, a  
*Roman Knight*, at his request contended in the *Mime* with  
 another Poet, he was forc'd to cry out, *Etiam favente me*  
*victus es Laberi*. But I will not on this occasion, take the advan-  
 tage of the greater number, but only urge such reasons  
 1925 against Rhyme, as I find in the Writings of those who have  
 argu'd for the other way. First then I am of opinion, that  
 Rhyme is unnatural in a Play, because Dialogue there is  
 presented as the effect of sudden thought. For a Play is the  
 imitation of Nature; and since no man, without premedita-

tion speaks in Rhyme, neither ought he to do it on the Stage; 1930  
 this hinders not but the Fancy may be there elevated to an  
 higher pitch of thought than it is in ordinary discourse: for  
 there is a probability that men of excellent and quick parts  
 may speak noble things *ex tempore*: but those thoughts are  
 never fetter'd with the numbers or sound of Verse without 1935  
 study, and therefore it cannot be but unnatural to present  
 the most free way of speaking, in that which is the most  
 constrain'd. For this Reason, says *Aristotle*; 'Tis best to  
 write Tragedy in that kind of Verse which is the least such,  
 or which is nearest Prose: and this amongst the Ancients 1940  
 was the Iambique, and with us is blank verse, or the measure  
 of verse, kept exactly without Rhyme. These numbers  
 therefore are fittest for a Play; the others for a paper of  
 Verses, or a Poem. Blank verse being as much below them,  
 as Rhyme is improper for the *Drama*. And if it be objected 1945  
 that neither are blank verses made *ex tempore*, yet as nearest  
 Nature, they are still to be preferr'd. But there are two par-  
 ticular exceptions which many besides my self have had to  
 verse; by which it will appear yet more plainly, how im-  
 proper it is in Plays. And the first of them is grounded on 1950  
 that very reason for which some have commended Rhyme:  
 they say the quickness of repartees in argumentative Scenes  
 receives an ornament from verse. Now what is more un-  
 reasonable than to imagine that a man should not only  
 light upon the Wit, but the Rhyme too upon the sudden? 1955  
 This nicking of him who spoke before both in sound and  
 measure, is so great an happiness, that you must at least sup-  
 pose the persons of your Play to be born Poets, *Arcades*  
*omnes et cantare pares et respondere parati*, they must have  
 arriv'd to the degree of *quicquid conabar dicere*: to make 1960

Verses almost whether they will or no: if they are any thing below this, it will look rather like the design of two, than the answer of one: it will appear that your Actors hold intelligence together, that they perform their tricks like  
 1965 Fortune-tellers, by confederacy. The hand of Art will be too visible in it against that maxim of all Professions; *Ars est celare artem*, That it is the greatest perfection of Art to keep it self undiscover'd. Nor will it serve you to object, that however you manage it, 'tis still known to be a Play; and  
 1970 consequently the Dialogue of two persons understood to be the labour of one Poet. For a Play is still an imitation of Nature; we know we are to be deceiv'd, and we desire to be so; but no man ever was deceiv'd but with a probability of truth, for who will suffer a gross lie to be fasten'd on him?  
 1975 Thus we sufficiently understand that the Scenes which represent Cities and Countries to us, are not really such, but only painted on boards and Canvass: But shall that excuse the ill Painture or designment of them; Nay rather ought they not to be labour'd with so much the more diligence  
 1980 and exactness to help the imagination? since the mind of man does naturally tend to truth: and therefore the nearer any thing comes to the imitation of it, the more it pleases.

Thus, you see, your Rhyme is incapable of expressing the greatest thoughts naturally, and the lowest it cannot with  
 1985 any grace: for what is more unbefitting the Majesty of Verse, than to call a Servant, or bid a door be shut in Rhime? And yet you are often forc'd on this miserable necessity. But Verse, you say, circumscribes a quick and luxuriant fancy, which would extend it self too far on every subject,  
 1990 did not the labour which is requir'd to well turn'd and polish'd Rhyme, set bounds to it. Yet this Argument, if

1981 tend to truth:] tend to, and seek after Truth; 1987 yet . . .  
 necessity.] yet this miserable necessity you are forc'd upon.

granted, would only prove that we may write better in Verse, but not more naturally. Neither is it able to evince that; for he who wants judgment to confine his fancy in blank Verse, may want it as much in Rhyme; and he who 1995 has it will avoid errors in both kinds. Latine verse was as great a confinement to the imagination of those Poets, as Rhyme to ours: and yet you find *Ovid* saying too much on every subject. *Nescivit* (says *Seneca*) *quod bene cessit relinquere*: of which he gives you one famous instance in his Descrip- 2000 tion of the Deluge.

Omnia pontus erat, decrant quoque Litora Ponto.

Now all was Sea, Nor had that Sea a shore. Thus *Ovid's* fancy was not limited by verse, and *Virgil* needed not verse 2005 to have bounded his.

In our own language we see *Ben. Johnson* confining himself to what ought to be said, even in the liberty of blank Verse; and yet *Corneille*, the most judicious of the *French* Poets, is still varying the same sense an hundred ways, and dwelling eternally on the same subject, though confin'd by 2010 Rhyme. Some other exceptions I have to Verse, but since these I have nam'd are for the most part already publick; I conceive it reasonable they should first be answer'd.

It concerns me less than any, said *Neander*, (seeing he had ended) to reply to this Discourse; because when I should 2015 have prov'd that Verse may be natural in Plays, yet I should always be ready to confess, that those which I have written in this kind come short of that perfection which is requir'd. Yet since you are pleas'd I should undertake this Province, I will do it, though with all imaginable respect and deference, 2020 both to that person from whom you have borrow'd your

2010 on] upon

2011 since] being

strongest Arguments, and to whose judgment when I have said all, I finally submit. But before I proceed to answer your objections, I must first remember you, that I exclude  
 2035 all Comedy from my defence; and next that I deny not but blank verse may be also us'd, and content my self only to assert, that in serious Plays where the subject and characters are great, and the Plot unmix'd with mirth, which might allay or divert these concernments which are produc'd  
 2030 Rhyme is there as natural, and more effectual than blank Verse.

And now having laid down this as a foundation to begin with *Crites*, I must crave leave to tell him, that some of his Arguments against Rhyme reach no farther than from the  
 2035 faults or defects of ill Rhyme, to conclude against the use of it in general. May not I conclude against blank verse by the same reason? If the words of some Poets who write in it, are either ill chosen, or ill placed (which makes not only Rhyme, but all kind of verse in any language unnatural;) Shall I, for  
 2040 their vicious affectation condemn those excellent lines of *Fletcher*, which are written in that kind? Is there any thing in Rhyme more constrain'd than this line in blank verse? *I Heav'n invoke, and strong resistance make*; where you see both the clauses are plac'd unnaturally; that is, contrary to the  
 2045 common way of speaking, and that without the excuse of a Rhyme to cause it: yet you would think me very ridiculous, if I should accuse the stubbornness of blank Verse for this, and not rather the stiffness of the Poet. Therefore, *Crites*, you must either prove that words, though well chosen, and duly  
 2050 plac'd, yet render not Rhyme natural in it self; or that however natural and easie the Rhyme may be, yet it is not proper for a Play. If you insist on the former part, I would ask you

what other conditions are requir'd to make Rhyme natural in it self, besides an election of apt words, and a right disposition of them? For the due choice of your words expresses <sup>2055</sup> your sense naturally, and the due placing them adapts the Rhyme to it. If you object that one verse may be made for the sake of another, though both the words and Rhyme be apt; I answer it cannot possibly so fall out; for either there is a dependance of sense betwixt the first line and the second, or <sup>2060</sup> there is none: if there be that connection, then in the natural position of the words, the latter line must of necessity flow from the former: if there be no dependance, yet still the due ordering of words makes the last line as natural in it self as the other: so that the necessity of a Rhyme never forces any <sup>2065</sup> but bad or lazy Writers to say what they would not otherwise. 'Tis true, there is both care and Art requir'd to write in Verse; A good Poet never establishes the first line, till he has sought out such a Rhyme as may fit the sense, already prepar'd to heighten the second: many times the close of the <sup>2070</sup> sense falls into the middle of the next verse, or farther off, and he may often prevail himself of the same advantages in English which *Virgil* had in Latine, he may break off in the *Hemystich*, and begin another line: indeed, the not observing these two last things, makes Plays which are writ in verse, so tedious: <sup>2075</sup> for though, most commonly, the sense is to be confin'd to the Couplet, yet nothing that does *perpetuo tenore fluere*, run in the same channel, can please always. 'Tis like the murmuring of a stream, which not varying in the fall, causes at first attention, at last drowsiness. Variety of cadences is the best <sup>2080</sup> rule, the greatest help to the Actors, and refreshment to the Audience.

If then Verse may be made natural in it self, how becomes

<sup>2054</sup> disposition] disposing

<sup>2068</sup> establishes] concludes upon

it unnaturall in a Play? You say the Stage is the representa-  
 2085 tion of Nature, and no man in ordinary conversation speaks  
 in Rhime. But you foresaw when you said this, that it might  
 be answer'd; neither does any man speak in blank verse, or  
 in measure without Rhime. Therefore you concluded, that  
 2090 which is nearest Nature is still to be preferr'd. But you took  
 no notice that Rhyme might be made as natural as blank  
 verse, by the well placing of the words, &c. all the differ-  
 ence between them when they are both correct, is the sound  
 in one, which the other wants; and if so, the sweetness of it,  
 and all the advantage resulting from it, which are handled  
 2095 in the Preface to the *Rival Ladies*, will yet stand good. As  
 for that place of *Aristotle*, where he says Plays should be  
 writ in that kind of Verse which is nearest Prose; it makes  
 little for you, blank verse being properly but measur'd  
 Prose. Now measure alone in any modern Language, does  
 2100 not constitute verse; those of the Ancients in Greek and  
 Latine, consisted in quantity of words, and a determinate  
 number of feet. But when, by the inundation of the *Goths*  
 and *Vandals* into *Italy* new Languages were introduced, and  
 barbarously mingled with the Latine (of which the *Italian*,  
 2105 *Spanish*, *French*, and ours, (made out of them and the  
*Teutonic*) are Dialects:) a new way of Poesie was practis'd;  
 new, I say in those Countries, for in all probability it was  
 that of the Conquerours in their own Nations: at least we  
 are able to prove, that the Eastern people have us'd it from  
 2110 all Antiquity, *Vid*, *Dan[iel]*, his *Defence of Rhyme*. This new  
 way consisted in measure or number of feet and Rhyme.  
 The sweetness of Rhyme, and observation of Accent, sup-  
 plying the place of quantity in words, which could neither

2084 unnaturall in] improper to      2103 introduced,] brought  
 in,      2108 Nations: . . . This] Nations. This

exactly be observ'd by those *Barbarians* who knew not the Rules of it, neither was it suitable to their tongues as it had been to the Greek and Latine. No man is tied in modern Poesie to observe any farther rule in the feet of his verse, but that they be dissyllables; whether *Spondee*, *Trochee*, or *Iambique*, it matters not; only he is obliged to Rhyme: Neither do the *Spanish*, *French*, *Italian* or *Germans* acknowledge at all, or very rarely any such kind of Poesie as blank verse amongst them. Therefore at most 'tis but a Poetick Prose, a *Sermo pedestris*, and as such most fit for Comedies, where I acknowledge Rhyme to be improper. Farther, as to that quotation of *Aristotle*, our Couplet Verses may be rendred as near Prose as blank verse it self, by using those advantages I lately nam'd, as breaks in an Hemystich, or running the sense into another line, thereby making Art and Order appear as loose and free as Nature; or not tying our selves to Couplets strictly, we may use the benefit of the Pindarique way practis'd in the *Siege of Rhodes*; where the numbers vary and the Rhyme is dispos'd carelesly, and far from often chyming. Neither is that other advantage of the Ancients to be despis'd, of changing the kind of verse when they please with the change of the Scene, or some new entrance: for they confine not themselves always to Iambiques, but extend their liberty to all Lyrique numbers, and sometimes even to Hexameter. But I need not go so far to prove that Rhyme, as it succeeds to all other offices of Greek and Latine Verse, so especially to this of Plays, since the custome of Nations at this day confirms it, the *French*, *Italian* and *Spanish* Tragedies are generally writ in it, and sure the Universal consent of the most civiliz'd parts of the world,

2127 an] a  
All the *French*,

2141 Nations] all Nations

2141 the *French*,]

ought in this, as it doth in other customs, to include the rest.

2145 But perhaps you may tell me I have propos'd such a way  
to make Rhyme natural, and consequently proper to Plays,  
as is unpracticable, and that I shall scarce find six or eight  
lines together in any Play, where the words are so plac'd  
and chosen as is requir'd to make it natural. I answer, no  
2150 Poet need constrain himself at all times to it. It is enough he  
makes it his general Rule; for I deny not but sometimes  
there may be a greatness in placing the words otherwise;  
and sometimes they may sound better, sometimes also the  
variety it self is excuse enough. But if, for the most part,  
2155 the words be plac'd as they are in the negligence of Prose,  
it is sufficient to denominate the way practicable; for we  
esteem that to be such, which in the Tryal oftner succeeds  
than misses. And thus far you may find the practice made  
good in many Plays; where you do not, remember still,  
2160 that if you cannot find six natural Rhymes together, it will  
be as hard for you to produce as many lines in blank Verse,  
even among the greatest of our Poets, against which I cannot  
make some reasonable exception.

And this, Sir, calls to my remembrance the beginning of  
2165 your discourse, where you told us we should never find the  
Audience favourable to this kind of writing, till we could  
produce as good Plays in Rhyme, as *Ben. Johnson*, *Fletcher*,  
and *Shakespeare*, had writ out of it. But it is to raise envy to  
the living, to compare them with the dead. They are  
2170 honour'd, and almost ador'd by us, as they deserve; neither  
do I know any so presumptuous of themselves as to contend  
with them. Yet give me leave to say thus much, without  
injury to their Ashes, that not only we shall never equal them,  
but they could never equal themselves, were they to rise and

write again. We acknowledge them our Fathers in wit, but 2175  
 they have ruin'd their Estates themselves before they came  
 to their childrens hands. There is scarce an Humour, a Char-  
 acter, or any kind of Plot, which they have not us'd. All  
 comes sullied or wasted to us: and were they to entertain  
 this Age, they could not now make so plenteous treatments 2180  
 out of such decay'd Fortunes. This therefore will be a good  
 Argument to us either not to write at all, or to attempt some  
 other way. There is no Bays to be expected in their Walks;  
*Tentanda via est quæ me quoque possum tollere humo.*

This way of writing in Verse, they have only left free to 2185  
 us; our age is arriv'd to a perfection in it, which they never  
 knew; and which (if we may guess by what of theirs we  
 have seen in Verse as the *Faithful Shepherdess*, and *Sad Shep-*  
*herd*): 'tis probable they never could have reach'd. For the  
 Genius of every Age is different; and though ours excel in 2190  
 this, I deny not but that to imitate Nature in that perfection  
 which they did in Prose, is a greater commendation than to  
 write in verse exactly. As for what you have added, that the  
 people are not generally inclin'd to like this way; if it were  
 true, it would be no wonder, that betwixt the shaking off 2195  
 an old habit, and the introducing of a new, there should be  
 difficulty. Do we not see them stick to *Hopkins* and *Stern-*  
*holds* Psalms, and forsake those of *David*, I mean *Sandys* his  
 Translation of them? If by the people you understand the  
 multitude, the *οἱ πολλοί*. 'Tis no matter what they think; 2200  
 they are sometimes in the right, sometimes in the wrong;  
 their judgment is a meer Lottery. *Est ubi plebs rectè putat, est ubi*  
*peccat.* *Horace* says it of the vulgar, judging Poesie. But if you  
 mean the mix'd audience of the populace, and the Noblesse,  
 I dare confidently affirm that a great part of the latter sort, 2205

2178 not us'd.] not blown upon:  
 make

2180 not now make] not

are already favourable to verse; and that no serious Plays written since the Kings return have been more kindly receiv'd by them, than the *Siege of Rhodes*, the *Mustapha*, the *Indian Queen*, and *Indian Emperor*.

2210 But I come now to the inference of your first Argument. You said that the Dialogue of Plays is presented as the effect of sudden thought, but no man speaks suddenly, or *ex tempore* in Rhyme: And you inferr'd from thence, that Rhyme, which you acknowledge to be proper to Epique  
2215 Poesie cannot equally be proper to Dramatick, unless we could suppose all men born so much more than Poets, that verses should be made in them, not by them.

It has been formerly urg'd by you, and confess'd by me, that since no man spoke any kind of verse *ex tempore*, that  
2220 which was nearest Nature was to be preferr'd. I answer you therefore, by distinguishing betwixt what is nearest to the nature of Comedy, which is the imitation of common persons and ordinary speaking, and what is nearest the nature of a serious Play: this last is indeed the representation of  
2225 Nature, but 'tis Nature wrought up to an higher pitch. The Plot, the Characters, the Wit, the Passions, the Descriptions, are all exalted above the level of common converse, as high as the imagination of the Poet can carry them, with proportion to verisimilitude. Tragedy we know is wont to  
2230 image to us the minds and fortunes of noble persons, and to portray these exactly; Heroick Rhime is nearest Nature, as being the noblest kind of modern verse.

Indignatur enim privatis, & prope socco,  
Dignis carminibus, narrari cæna Thyestæ. (*Says Horace.*)

2235 And in another place,

Effutire leves indigna tragoedia versus.

2241 said that the] said the

Blank Verse is acknowledg'd to be too low for a Poem; nay more, for a paper of verses; but if too low for an ordinary Sonnet, how much more for Tragedy, which is by *Aristotle* in the dispute betwixt the Epique Poesie and the Dramatick, 2240 for many reasons he there alledges, rank'd above it?

But setting this defence aside, your Argument is almost as strong against the use of Rhyme in Poems as in Plays; for the Epique way is every where interlac'd with Dialogue, or discursive Scenes; and therefore you must either grant 2245 Rhyme to be improper there, which is contrary to your assertion, or admit it into Plays by the same title which you have given it to Poems. For though Tragedy be justly preferr'd above the other, yet there is a great affinity between them, as may easily be discover'd in that definition of a Play 2250 which *Lisideius* gave us. The Genus of them is the same, a just and lively Image of humane nature, in its Actions, Passions, and traverses of Fortune: so is the end, namely for the delight and benefit of Mankind. The Characters and Persons are still the same, *viz.* the greatest of both sorts, only 2255 the manner of acquainting us with those Actions, Passions and Fortunes is different. Tragedy performs it *viva voce*, or by action, in Dialogue, wherein it excels the Epique Poem which does it chiefly by narration, and therefore is not so lively an Image of Humane Nature. However, the agree- 2260 ment betwixt them is such, that if Rhyme be proper for one, it must be for the other. Verse 'tis true is not the effect of sudden thought; but this hinders not that sudden thought may be represented in verse, since those thoughts are such as must be higher than Nature can raise them without pre- 2265 meditation, especially to a continuance of them even out of verse, and consequently you cannot imagine them to have been sudden either in the Poet, or the Actors. A Play, as I have said to be like Nature, is to be set above it; as Statues

2270 which are plac'd on high are made greater than the life, that they may descend to the sight in their just proportion.

Perhaps I have insisted too long on this objection; but the clearing of it will make my stay shorter on the rest. You tell us *Crites*, that Rhyme appears most unnatural in repartees, 2275 or short replies: when he who answers, (it being Presum'd he knew not what the other would say, yet) makes up that part of the verse which was left incompleat, and supplies both the sound and measure of it. This you say looks rather like the confederacy of two, than the answer of one.

2280 This, I confess, is an objection which is in every mans mouth who loves not Rhyme: but suppose, I beseech you, the repartee were made only in blank verse, might not part of the same argument be turn'd against you? for the measure is as often supply'd there as it is in Rhyme. The latter half 2285 of the Hemystich as commonly made up, or a second line subjoyn'd as a reply to the former; which any one leaf in *Johnson's Plays* will sufficiently clear to you. You will often find in the Greek Tragedians, and in *Seneca*, that when a Scene grows up into the warmth of repartees (which is the 2290 close fighting of it) the latter part of the Trimeter is supply'd by him who answers; and yet it was never observ'd as a fault in them by any of the Ancient or Modern Criticks. The case is the same in our verse as it was in theirs; Rhyme to us being in lieu of quantity to them. But if no latitude is to be 2295 allow'd a Poet, you take from him not only his license of *quidlibet audendi*, but you tie him up in a straighter compass than you would a Philosopher. This is indeed *Musas colere severiores*: You would have him follow Nature, but he must follow her on foot: you have dismounted him from his 2300 *Pegasus*. But you tell us this supplying the last half of a verse,

or adjoyning a whole second to the former, looks more like the design of two than the answer of one. Suppose we acknowledge it: how comes this confederacy to be more displeasing to you than in a Dance which is well contriv'd? You see there the united design of many persons to make up one Figure: after they have separated themselves in many petty divisions, they rejoyne one by one into a gross: the confederacy is plain amongst them; for chance could never produce any thing so beautiful, and yet there is nothing in it, that shocks your sight. I acknowledge the hand of Art appears in repartee, as of necessity it must in all kind of verse. But there is also the quick and poynant brevity of it (which is an high imitation of Nature in those sudden gusts of passion) to mingle with it: and this joyn'd with the cadency and sweetness of the Rhyme, leaves nothing in the soul of the hearer to desire. 'Tis an Art which appears; but it appears only like the shadowings of Painture, which being to cause the rounding of it, cannot be absent; but while that is consider'd they are lost: so while we attend to the other beauties of the matter, the care and labour of the Rhyme is carry'd from us, or at least drown'd in its own sweetness, as Bees are sometimes bury'd in their Honey. When a Poet has found the repartee, the last perfection he can add to it, is to put it into verse. However good the thought may be; however apt the words in which 'tis couch'd, yet he finds himself at a little unrest while Rhyme is wanting: he cannot leave it till that comes naturally, and then is at ease, and sits down contented.

From Replies, which are the most elevated thoughts of Verse, you pass to those which are most mean and which are common with the lowest of household conversation.

In these, you say, the Majesty of Verse suffers. You instance in the calling of a servant, or commanding a door to be shut in Rhyme. This, *Crites*, is a good observation of yours, but no argument: for it proves no more but that such thoughts should be wav'd, as often as may be, by the address of the Poet. But suppose they are necessary in the places where he uses them, yet there is no need to put them into Rhyme. He may place them in the beginning of a Verse, and break it off, as unfit, when so debas'd for any other use: or granting the worst, that they require more room than the Hemystich will allow; yet still there is a choice to be made of the best words, and least vulgar (provided they be apt) to express such thoughts. Many have blam'd Rhyme in general, for this fault, when the Poet, with a little care, might have redress'd it. But they do it with no more justice, than if English Poesie should be made ridiculous for the sake of the Water Poet's Rhymes. Our language is noble, full and significant; and I know not why he who is Master of it may not cloath ordinary things in it as decently as the Latine; if he use the same diligence in his choice of words.

Delectus verborum Origo est Eloquentiæ.

It was the saying of *Julius Cæsar*, one so curious in his, that none of them can be chang'd but for a worse. One would think unlock the door was a thing as vulgar as could be spoken; and yet *Seneca* could make it sound high and lofty in his Latine.—

Rescrate clusos Regii postes Laris.

Set wide the Palace gates.

Laris. . . . But] Laris. But

But I turn from this exception, both because it happens not above twice or thrice in any Play that those vulgar thoughts are us'd; and then too (were there no other Apology to be made, yet) the necessity of them (which is alike in all kind of writing) may excuse them. For if they <sup>2365</sup> are little and mean in Rhyme, they are of consequence such in Blank Verse. Besides that the great eagerness and precipitation with which they are spoken makes us rather mind the substance than the dress; that for which they are spoken, rather than what is spoke. For they are always the effect of <sup>2370</sup> some hasty concernment, and something of consequence depends on them.

Thus, *Crites*, I have endeavour'd to answer your objections; it remains only that I should vindicate an Argument for Verse, which you have have gone about to overthrow. <sup>2375</sup> It had formerly been said, that the easiness of blank verse, renders the Poet too luxuriant, but that the labour of Rhyme bounds and circumscribes an over-fruitful fancy. The sence there being commonly confin'd to the couplet, and the words so order'd that the Rhyme naturally follows <sup>2380</sup> them, not they the Rhyme. To this you answer'd, that it was no Argument to the question in hand, for the dispute was not which way a man may write best; but which is most proper for the subject on which he writes.

First, give me leave, Sir, to remember you that the Argu- <sup>2385</sup> ment against which you rais'd this objection, was only secondary: it was built on this *Hypothesis*, that to write in verse was proper for serious Plays. Which supposition being granted (as it was briefly made out in that discourse, by shewing how verse might be made natural) it asserted, that <sup>2390</sup> this way of writing was an help to the Poets judgment,

<sup>2365</sup> them. . . . Besides] them. Besides      <sup>2372</sup> on] upon  
<sup>2379</sup> sence 1668] scene 1684      <sup>2387</sup> on] upon

by putting bounds to a wilde over-flowing Fancy. I think therefore it will not be hard for me to make good what it was to prove on that supposition. But you add, that were  
 2395 this let pass, yet he who wants judgment in the liberty of his fancy, may as well shew the defect of it when he is confin'd to verse: for he who has judgment will avoid errours, and he who has it not, will commit them in all kinds of writing.

This Argument, as you have taken it from a most acute  
 2400 person, so I confess it carries much weight in it. But by using the word Judgment here indefinitely, you seem to have put a fallacy upon us: I grant he who has Judgment, that is, so profound, so strong, or rather so infallible a judgment, that he needs no helps to keep it always pois'd and  
 2405 upright, will commit no faults either in Rhyme or out of it. And on the other extream, he who has a judgment so weak and craz'd that no helps can correct or amend it, shall write scurvily out of Rhyme, and worse in it. But the first of these judgments is no where to be found, and the latter is not fit to  
 2410 write at all. To speak therefore of judgment as it is in the best Poets: they who have the greatest proportion of it, want other helps than from it within. As for example, you would be loth to say, that he who is indued with a sound judgment has no need of History, Geography, or Moral  
 2415 Philosophy, to write correctly. Judgment is indeed the Master-workman in a Play: but he requires many subordinate hands, many tools to his assistance. And verse I affirm to be one of these: 'Tis a Rule and line by which he keeps his building compact and even, which otherwise lawless  
 2420 imagination would raise either irregularly or loosly. At least if the Poet commits errours with this help, he would make greater and more without it: 'tis (in short) a slow and

2394 prove . . . But] prove: But      2403 strong . . . so] strong,  
 so      2413 is] was      2414 has] had

painful, but the surest kind of working. *Ovid* whom you accuse for luxuriancy in Verse, had perhaps been farther guilty of it had he writ in Prose. And for your instance of *Ben. Johnson*, who you say, writ exactly without the help of Rhyme; you are to remember 'tis only an aid to a luxuriant Fancy, which his was not: As he did not want imagination, so none ever said he had much to spare. Neither was verse then refin'd so much to be an help to that Age as it is to ours. Thus then the second thoughts being usually the best, as receiving the maturest digestion from judgment, and the last and most mature product of those thoughts being artful and labour'd verse, it may well be inferr'd, that verse is a great help to a luxuriant Fancy; and this is what that Argument which you oppos'd was to evince.

*Neander* was pursuing this Discourse so eagerly, that *Eugenius* had call'd to him twice or thrice ere he took notice that the Barge stood still, and that they were at the foot of *Somerset-Stairs*, where they had appointed it to land. The company were all sorry to separate so soon, though a great part of the evening was already spent; and stood a while looking back on the water, upon which the Moon-beams play'd, and made it appear like floating quick-silver: at last they went up through a crowd of French people who were merrily dancing in the open air, and nothing concern'd for the noise of Guns which had allarm'd the Town that afternoon. Walking thence together to the *Piazze* they parted there; *Eugenius* and *Lysideius* to some pleasant appointment they had made, and *Crites* and *Neander* to their several Lodgings.

## FINIS

THE  
Great Favourite,  
Or, the  
DUKE  
OF  
LERMA.

As it was Acted at the  
*THEATRE-ROYAL*  
By His MAJESTIES Servants.

---

*Written by the Honourable*  
Sir ROBERT HOWARD.

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*In the SAVOY:*  
Printed for Henry Herringman, at the Sign of the  
*Anchor*, on the Lower-walk of the  
New-Exchange. 1668.

# THE PREFACE TO THE GREAT FAVOURITE

## TO THE READER

I CANNOT plead the usual excuse for publishing this trifle, which is commonly the Subject of most Prefaces; by charging it upon the importunity of friends; for, I confess, I was my self willing, at the first desire of Mr. *Herringman* to print it; not for any great opinion that I had entertain'd; 5 but for the opinion that others were pleas'd to express: which being told me by some friends, I was concerned to let the World judge what subject matter of offence was contain'd in it: some were pleas'd to believe, little of it mine: but they are both obliging to me; though perhaps not 10 intentionally; the last, by thinking there was any thing in it that was worth so ill designed an Envy, as to place it to another Author; the others (perhaps the best bred Informers) by continuing their displeasure towards me, since I most gratefully acknowledge to have received some advantage in 15 the opinion of the sober part of the World, by the loss of theirs.

For the Subject, I came accidentally to write upon it; for a Gentleman brought a Play to the Kings Company, call'd, *The Duke of Lerma*; and by them I was desir'd to peruse it, 20 and return my opinion, whether I thought it fit for the Stage; after I had read it, I acquainted them, that in my judgement it would not be of much use for such a design, since the contrivance, scarce would merit the name of a plot; and some of that, assisted by a disguise; and it ended 25 abruptly: and on the Person of *Philip* the 3. there was fixt such a mean Character, and on the Daughter of the Duke of *Lerma*, such a vitious one, that I could not but judge it

unfit to be presented by any that had a respect, not only to  
 30 Princes, but indeed to either Man or Woman; and about  
 that time, being to go into the Countrey, I was perswaded  
 by Mr. *Hart* to make it my diversion there that so great a  
 hint might not be lost, as the Duke of *Lerma* saving himself  
 35 in his last extremity, by his unexpected disguise, which is as  
 well in the true story as the old Play; and besides that and  
 the Names, my altering the most part of the Characters, and  
 the whole design, made me incapable to use much more;  
 though perhaps written with higher Stile and Thoughts,  
 then I could attain to.

40 I intend not to trouble my self nor the World any more  
 in such subjects, but take my leave of these my too long  
 acquaintances; since that little fancy and liberty I once  
 enjoy'd, is now fetter'd in business of more unpleasant  
 45 Natures; yet were I free to apply my thoughts as my own  
 choice directed them; I should hardly again venter into the  
 Civil Wars of Censures.

Ubi—Nullos habitura Triumphos.

In the next place, I must ingeniously confess, that the  
 manner of Plays which now are in most esteem, is beyond  
 50 my power to perform; nor do I condemn in the least any  
 thing of what Nature soever that pleases; since nothing  
 cou'd appear to me a ruder folly, than to censure the satis-  
 faction of others; I rather blame the unnecessary understand-  
 ing of some that have labour'd to give strict rules to things  
 55 that are not Mathematical, and with such eagerness, persuing  
 their own seeming reasons, that at last we are to apprehend  
 such Argumentative Poets will grow as strict as *Sancho*  
*Pancos* Doctor was to our very Appetites; for in the differ-  
 ence of *Tragedy* and *Comedy*, and of *Fars* it self, there can be  
 60 no determination but by the Taste; nor in the manner of

their Composure; and who ever wou'd endeavour to like or dislike by the Rules of others, he will be as unsuccessful, as if he should try to be perswaded into a power of believing; not what he must, but what others direct him to believe.

But I confess, 'tis not necessary for Poets to study strict reason, since they are so us'd to a greater Latitude then is allow'd by that severe Inquisition; that they must infringe their own Jurisdiction, to profess themselves oblig'd to argue well: I will not therefore pretend to say, why I writ this Play, some Scenes in blank Verse, others in Rhime, since I have no better a reason to give then Chance, which waited upon my present Fancy; and I expect no better a reason from any ingenious person, then his Fancy for which he best relishes.

I cannot therefore but beg leave of the Reader, to take a little notice of the great pains the Author of an *Essay of Dramatick Poesie* has taken, to prove Rhime as natural in a serious Play, and more effectual than blank Verse: thus he states the question, but persues that which he calls Natural in a wrong Application; for 'tis not the question, whether Rhime or not Rhime, be best, or most Natural for a grave and serious Subject; but what is neerest the nature of that which it presents. Now after all the endeavours of that ingenious Person, a Play will still be supposed to be a Composition of several Persons speaking, *ex tempore*; and 'tis as certain, that good Verses are the hardest things that can be imagin'd to be so spoken; so that if any will be pleas'd to impose the rule of measuring things to be the best, by being nearest Nature; it is granted by consequence, that which is most remote from the thing supposed, must needs be most improper; and therefore I may justly say, that both I and the question were equally mistaken, for I do own, I had rather read good Verses, then either blank Verse or Prose,

and therefore the Author did himself injury, if he like Verse  
 95 so well in Plays, to lay down rules to raise Arguments, only  
 unanswerable against himself.

But the same Author being fill'd with the presidents of the  
 Antients writing their Plays in Verse, commends the thing,  
 and assures us, that our Language is Noble, Full, and  
 100 Significant; charging all defects upon the ill placing of  
 words, and proves it by quoting *Seneca*, loftily expressing  
 such an ordinary thing as shutting a door.

Reserate Clusos Regii postes Laris.

I suppose he was himself highly affected with the sound of  
 105 these words; but to have Compleated his Dictates together  
 with his Arguments, he should have oblig'd us, by charming  
 our Eares with such an Art of placing words, as in an English  
 Verse to express so loftily the shutting of a Door, that we  
 might have been as much affected with the sound of his  
 110 words; this, instead of being an argument upon the question  
 rightly stated, is an attempt, to prove that nothing may  
 seeme something, by the help of a Verse, which I easily  
 grant to be the ill-fortune of it; and therefore the question  
 being so much mistaken, I wonder to see that Author  
 115 trouble himself twice about it, with such an absolute triumph  
 declared by his own imagination: But I have heard that a  
 Gentleman in Parliament going to speak twice, and being  
 interrupted by another Member, as against the Orders of  
 the House, he was excused by a third, assuring the House he  
 120 had not yet spoken to the Question.

But if we examine the general rules laid down for Playes  
 by strict Reason, we shall find the errors equally gross; for  
 the great foundation that is laid to build upon is nothing, as  
 it is generally stated; which will appear upon the examina-  
 125 tion of the particulars.

First, We are told the Plot should not be so ridiculously contriv'd, as to crowd two several Countries into one stage; secondly, to cram the Accidents of many years or dayes into the representation of two houres and a halfe: And Lastly, a Conclusion drawn, that the only remaining dispute is concerning time; whether it should be contain'd in twelve, or four and twenty hours, and the place to be limited to the spot of ground, either in Town or City, where the Play is suppos'd to begin; And this is call'd nearest to Nature: For that is concluded most natural, which is most probable, and nearest to that which it presents.

I am so well pleas'd with any ingenuous offers, as all these are, that I should not examine this strictly, did not the confidence of others force me to it; there being not any thing more unreasonable to my Judgment, then the attempt to infringe the Liberty of Opinion by Rules so little demonstrative.

To shew therefore upon what ill grounds they dictate Lawes for *Dramatick Poesie*, I shall endeavour to make it evident, that there's no such thing as what they all pretend; for, if strictly and duely weigh'd, 'tis as impossible for one stage to present two Houses, or two Roomes truely, as two Countreys or Kingdomes; and as impossible that five houres, or four and twenty houres should be two houres and a halfe, as that a thousand houres or yeares should be less than what they are; or the greatest part of time to be comprehended in the less; for all being impossible, they are none of them nearest the truth, or nature, of what they present, for Impossibilities are all equal, and admit no degrees: and then if all those Poets that have so fervently labour'd to give Rules as Maximes, would but be pleased to abreviate, or endure to hear their Reasons reduc't into one strict definition, it must be, that there are degrees in impossibilities, and

that many things which are not possible, may yet be more  
 160 or less impossible; and from this proceed to give rules to  
 observe the least absurdity in things which are not at all.

I suppose I need not trouble the Reader with so impertinent  
 a delay to attempt a farther Confutation of such ill-  
 grounded reasons, then thus by opening the true state of the  
 165 Case, nor do I design to make any farther use of it, then  
 from hence to draw this modest Conclusion. That I would  
 have all attempts of this nature be submitted to the fancy of  
 others, and bear the name of Propositions, not of Confident  
 Lawes, or Rules made by Demonstration; and then I shall  
 170 not discommend any Poet that dresses his Play in such a  
 fashion as his fancy best approves; and fairly leave it for  
 others to follow, if it appears to them most convenient, and  
 fullest of ornament.

But writing this Epistle in so much haste, I had almost  
 175 forgot one Argument, or Observation, which that Author  
 has most good fortune in; It is in his *Epistle Dedicatory*, before  
 his *Essay of Dramaticke Poesie*; where, speaking of Rhyme in  
 Playes, he desires it may be observ'd, That none are violent  
 against it, but such as have not attempted it, or who have  
 180 succeeded ill in the attempt; which as to my self and him I  
 easily acknowledge; for I confess none has written in that  
 way better then himself, nor few worse than I; Yet, I hope,  
 he is so ingenuous, that he would not wish this Argument  
 should extend further then to him and me; for if it should  
 185 be received as a good one, all *Divines* and *Philosophers*, would  
 find a readier way of Confutation then they yet have done,  
 of any that should oppose the least Thesis or Definition, by  
 saying, they were denied by none but such as never  
 attempted to write, or succeeded ill in the attempt.

190 Thus as I am one that am extreemly well pleas'd with most  
 of the *Propositions*, which are ingeniously laid down in that

Essay for regulating the Stage; so I am also alwayes Concern'd for the true honour of reason, and would have no spurious issue Father'd upon her. Fancy, may be allow'd her wantonness; but reason is alwayes pure and chast: and as it resembles the Sun, in making all things clear, it also resembles it in its several positions, when it shines in full height, and directly ascendant over any Subject, it leaves but little shaddow; But when descended and grown low, its oblique shining renders the shadow larger then the substance, and gives the deceiv'd person a wrong measure of his own proportion.

Thus begging the *Readers* Excuse for this seeming Impertinency, I submit what I have written to the liberty of his unconfin'd Opinion, which is all the favour I ask of others to afford to me.

## A DEFENCE OF AN ESSAY

*A Defence of an Essay of Dramatique Poesie, being an Answer to the Preface of The Great Favourite, or the Duke of Lerma.*

THE former Edition of the *Indian Emperour* being full of faults which had escaped the Printer, I have been willing to over-look this second with more care: and though I could not allow my self so much time as was necessary, yet by that little I have done, the Press is freed from some gross errors which it had to answer for before. As for the more material faults of writing, which are properly mine, though I see many of them, I want leisure to amend them. 'Tis enough for those who make one Poem the business of their lives, to leave that correct; yet, excepting *Virgil*, I never met with any which was so in any Language. 5

But while I was thus employ'd about this Impression, there came to my hands a new printed Play, called, *The Great Favourite, or the Duke of Lerma*. The Author of which, a noble and most ingenious Person, has done me the favour to make some Observations and Animadversions upon my *Dramatique Essay*. I must confess he might have better consulted his Reputation, than by matching himself with so weak an Adversary. But if his Honour be diminished in the choice of his Antagonist, it is sufficiently recompens'd in the election of his Cause: which being the weaker, in all appearance, as combating the received Opinions of the best Ancient and Modern Authors, will add to his glory, if he overcome; and to the opinion of his generosity, if he be vanquished, since he engages at so great odds; and, so like a Cavalier, undertakes the protection of the weaker party. I have only to fear on my own behalf, that so good a cause as mine may not suffer by my ill management, or weak 15 20 25

defence; yet I cannot in Honour but take the Glove when  
 30 'tis offer'd me: though I am only a Champion by succession;  
 and no more able to defend the right of *Aristotle* and  
*Horace*, than an Infant *Dimock* to maintain the Title of a  
 King.

For my own concernment in the Controversie, it is so  
 35 small, that I can easily be contented to be driven from a few  
 Notions of Dramatique Poesie; especially by one, who has  
 the reputation of understanding all things: and I might  
 justly make that excuse for my yielding to him, which the  
 Philosopher made to the Emperour; why should I offer to  
 40 contend with him who is Master of more than twenty  
 Legions of Arts and Sciences? But I am forc'd to fight, and  
 therefore it will be no shame to be overcome.

Yet I am so much his Servant as not to meddle with any  
 thing which does not concern me in his Preface: therefore I  
 45 leave the good sense and other excellencies of the first  
 twenty lines to be consider'd by the Critiques. As for the  
 Play of the *Duke of Lerma*, having so much alter'd and  
 beautifi'd it, as he has done, it can justly belong to none but  
 him. Indeed they must be extream ignorant as well as  
 50 envious, who would rob him of that Honour; for you see  
 him putting in his claim to it, even in the first two lines.

Repulse upon repulse like waves thrown back,  
 That slide to hang upon obdurate rocks.

After this let detraction do its worst; for if this be not his,  
 55 it deserves to be. For my part I declare for distributive  
 Justice, and from this and what follows he certainly deserves  
*those advantages, which he acknowledges to have received from*  
*the opinion of sober men.*

In the next place I must beg leave to observe his great  
 60 Address in courting the Reader to his party. For intending

to assault all Poets, both Ancient and Modern, he discovers not his whole design at once, but seems only to aim at me, and attacques me on my weakest side, my defence of Verse.

To begin with me, he gives me the Compellation of *The Author of a Dramatique Essay*; which is a little Discourse in Dialogue, for the most part borrowed from the observations of others: therefore, that I may not be wanting to him in civility, I return his Complement by calling him *The Author of the Duke of Lerma*. 65

But (that I may pass over his salute) he takes notice of my great pains to prove Rhyme as natural in a serious Play, and more effectual than blanck Verse. Thus indeed I did state the question; but he tells me, *I pursue that which I call Natural in a wrong application: for 'tis not the question whether Rhyme or not Rhyme be best or most natural for a serious subject, but what is nearest the nature of that it represents*. 75

If I have formerly mistaken the Question, I must confess my ignorance so far, as to say I continue still in my mistake: But he ought to have prov'd that I mistook it; for 'tis yet but *gratis dictum*; I still shall think I have gain'd my point, if I can prove that Rhyme is best or most natural for a serious subject. As for the question as he states it, whether Rhyme be nearest the nature of what it represents, I wonder he should think me so ridiculous as to dispute whether Prose or Verse be nearest to ordinary Conversation? 85

It still remains for him to prove his inference; that since Verse is granted to be more remote than Prose from ordinary Conversation, therefore no serious Plays ought to be writ in Verse: and when he clearly makes that good, I will acknowledge his Victory as absolute as he can desire it. 90

The question now is which of us two has mistaken it, and if it appear I have not, the world will suspect *what Gentleman that was, who was allowed to speak twice in Parliament, because*

he had not yet spoken to the Question; and perhaps conclude  
95 it to be the same, who, as 'tis reported, maintain'd a contradiction *in terminis*, in the face of three hundred persons.

But to return to Verse, whether it be natural or not in Plays, is a Problem which is not demonstrable of either side: 'tis enough for me that he acknowledges he had rather read  
100 good Verse than Prose: for if all the Enemies of Verse will confess as much, I shall not need to prove that it is natural. I am satisfied if it cause delight: for delight is the chief, if not the only end of Poesie; instruction can be admitted but in the second place, for Poesie only instructs as it delights.  
105 'Tis true that to imitate well is a Poets work; but to affect the Soul, and excite the Passions, and above all to move admiration (which is the delight of serious Plays) a bare imitation will not serve. The converse therefore which a Poet is to imitate, must be heighten'd with all the Arts and  
110 Ornaments of Poesie; and must be such, as, strictly consider'd, could never be supposed spoken by any without premeditation.

As for what he urges, that a Play will still be supposed to be a composition of several Persons speaking *ex tempore*; and that  
115 good Verses are the hardest things which can be imagin'd to be so spoken: I must crave leave to dissent from his opinion, as to the former part of it; for, if I am not deceiv'd, a Play is suppos'd to be the work of the Poet, imitating, or representing the conversation of several persons: and this I think  
120 to be as clear, as he thinks the contrary.

But I will be bolder, and do not doubt to make it good, though a Paradox, that one great reason why Prose is not to be us'd in serious Plays, is because it is too near the nature of converse: there may be too great a likeness; as the  
125 most skilful Painters affirm, that there may be too near a resemblance in a Picture: to take every lineament and

feature is not to make an excellent piece, but to take so much only as will make a beautiful Resemblance of the whole, and, with an ingenious flattery of Nature, to heighten the beauties of some parts, and hide the deformities of the rest. For so 130  
says *Horace*,

Ut pictura Poesis erit, &c.—

Hæc amat obscurum, vult hæc sub luce videri,

Judicis argutum quæ non formidat acumen.

—Et quæ

135

Desperat, tractata nitescere posse, relinquit.

In *Bartholomew-Fair*, or the Lowest kind of Comedy, that degree of heightning is used, which is proper to set off that Subject: 'tis true the Author was not there to go out of Prose, as he does in his higher Arguments of Comedy, 140  
*The Fox* and *Alchymist*; yet he does so raise his matter in that Prose, as to render it delightful; which he could never have performed, had he only said or done those very things that are daily spoken or practised in the Fair: for then the Fair it self would be as full of pleasure to an ingenious person as the 145  
Play; which we manifestly see it is not. But he hath made an excellent Lazar of it; the Copy is of price, though the Original be vile. You see in *Catiline* and *Sejanus*, where the Argument is great, he sometimes ascends to Verse, which shews he thought it not unnatural in serious Plays: and had 150  
his Genius been as proper for Rhyme, as it was for Humour; or had the Age in which he liv'd, attain'd to as much knowledge in Verse, as ours, 'tis probable he would have adorn'd those Subjects with that kind of Writing.

Thus Prose, though the rightful Prince, yet is by common 155  
consent depos'd, as too weak for the government of serious Plays; and he failing, there now start up two Competitors; one the nearer in blood, which is blanck Verse; the other

more fit for the ends of government, which is Rhyme.  
160 Blanck Verse is, indeed, the nearer Prose, but he is blemish'd  
with the weakness of his Predecessor. Rhyme (for I will deal  
clearly) has somewhat of the Usurper in him, but he is  
brave, and generous, and his Dominion pleasing. For this  
reason of delight, the Ancients (whom I will still believe as  
165 wise as those who so confidently correct them) wrote all  
their Tragedies in Verse, though they knew it most remote  
from Conversation.

But I perceive I am falling into the danger of another  
rebuke from my Opponent: for when I plead that the  
170 Ancients used Verse, I prove not that they would have  
admitted Rhyme, had it then been written: all I can say is  
only this, That it seems to have succeeded Verse by the  
general consent of Poets in all Modern Languages: for  
almost all their serious Plays are written in it: which, though  
175 it be no demonstration that therefore they ought to be so,  
yet, at least the practice first, and then the continuation of it,  
shews that it attain'd the end, which was to please; and if  
that cannot be compass'd here, I will be the first who shall  
lay it down. For I confess my chief endeavours are to delight  
180 the Age in which I live. If the humour of this, be for low  
Comedy, small Accidents, and Raillery, I will force my  
Genius to obey it, though with more reputation I could  
write in Verse. I know I am not so fitted by Nature to write  
Comedy: I want that gayety of humour which is required  
185 to it. My Conversation is slow and dull, my humour Saturn-  
ine and reserv'd: In short, I am none of those who endeavour  
to break Jests in Company, or make reparties. So that those  
who decry my Comedies do me no injury, except it be in  
point of profit: reputation in them is the last thing to which  
190 I shall pretend. I beg pardon for entertaining the Reader  
with so ill a Subject; but before I quit that Argument, which

was the cause of this digression, I cannot but take notice how I am corrected for my quotation of *Seneca*, in my Defence of Plays in Verse. My words are these. Our Language is Noble, Full, and Significant, and I know not why he who is Master of it, may not cloath ordinary things in it as decently as the Latine, if he use the same diligence in his choice of Words. One would think *Unlock a door* was a thing as vulgar as could be spoken; yet *Seneca* could make it sound high and lofty in his Latine.

Reserate Clusos Regii postes Laris.

But he says of me, *That being fill'd with the Precedents of the Ancients who writ their Plays in Verse, I commend the thing, declaring our Language to be Full, Noble, and Significant, and charging all defects upon the ill placing of words, which I prove by quoting Seneca loftily expressing such an ordinary thing as shutting a door.*

Here he manifestly mistakes; for I spoke not of the placing, but of the choice of words: for which I quoted that Aphorism of *Julius Cæsar*, *Delectus verborum est origo Eloquentiæ*: but *delectus verborum* is no more Latine for the placing of words, than *Reserate* is Latine for shut the door, as he interprets it, which I ignorantly construed unlock or open it.

He supposes I was highly affected with the sound of those words; and I suppose I may more justly imagine it of him: for if he had not been extreamly satisfied with the sound, he would have minded the sense a little better.

But these are now to be no faults; for ten days after his Book is publish'd, and that his mistakes are grown so famous, that they are come back to him, he sends his *Errata* to be printed, and annexed to his Play: and desires that instead of

shutting you would read opening; which it seems, was the Printers fault. I wonder at his modesty, that he did not rather  
225 say it was *Seneca's* or mine, and that in some Authors *Reserate* was to shut as well as to open, as the word *Barach*, say the Learned, is both to bless and curse.

Well, since it was the Printer, he was a naughty man to commit the same mistake twice in six lines: I warrant you  
230 *delectus verborum* for placing of words was his mistake too, though the Author forgot to tell him of it: if it were my Book I assure you it should. For those Rascals ought to be the Proxies of every Gentleman Author, and to be chastis'd for him, when he is not pleas'd to own an Errour. Yet since  
235 he has given the *Errata*, I wish he would have enlarged them only a few sheets more, and then he would have spar'd me the labour of an Answer: for this cursed Printer is so given to mistakes, that there is scarce a sentence in the Preface, without some false Grammar, or hard sence in it: which will  
240 all be charg'd upon the Poet, because he is so good natur'd as to lay but three Errours to the Printers account, and to take the rest upon himself, who is better able to support them. But he needs not apprehend that I should strictly examine those little faults, except I am call'd upon to do it:  
245 I shall return therefore to that quotation of *Seneca*, and answer not to what he writes, but to what he means. I never intended it as an Argument, but only as an illustration of what I had said before concerning the election of words; and all he can charge me with is only this, that if *Seneca* could  
250 make an ordinary thing sound well in Latine by the choice of words, the same with the like care might be perform'd in English: if it cannot, I have committed an Errour on the right hand, by commending too much the copiousness and well sounding of our Language, which I hope my Country  
255 men will pardon me. At least the words which follow in my

*Dramatique Essay* will plead somewhat in my behalf; for I say there, that this Objection happens but seldom in a Play, and then too either the meanness of the expression may be avoided, or shut out from the Verse by breaking it in the midst.

260

But I have said too much in the defence of Verse; for after all 'tis a very indifferent thing to me, whether it obtain or not. I am content hereafter to be ordered by his rule, that is, to write it sometimes because it pleases me, and so much the rather, because he has declared that it pleases him. But he has taken his last farewell of the Muses, and he has done it civilly, by honouring them with the name of *his long acquaintances*, which is a Compliment they have scarce deserved from him. For my own part I bear a share in the publick loss, and how emulous soever I may be of his fame and reputation, I cannot but give this testimony of his Style, that it is extream poetical, even in Oratory; his Thoughts elevated, sometimes above common apprehension; his Notions politick and grave, and tending to the instruction of Princes, and reformation of States; that they are abundantly interlac'd with variety of Fancies, Tropes, and Figures, which the Criticks have enviously branded with the name of obscurity and false Grammar.

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*Well he is now fetter'd in business of more unpleasant nature:* the Muses have lost him, but the Commonwealth gains by it; The corruption of a Poet is the Generation of a Statesman.

280

*He will not venture again into the civil Wars of Censure, ubi—nullos habitura triumphos:* if he had not told us he had left the Muses, we might have half suspected it by that word, *ubi*, which does not any way belong to them in that place; the rest of the Verse is indeed *Lucans*, but that *ubi* I will answer for it, is his own. Yet he has another reason for this disgust

285

of Poesie; for he says immediately after, that *the manner of*  
290 *Plays which are now in most esteem, is beyond his power to*  
*perform: to perform the manner of a thing I confess is new*  
*English to me. However, he condemns not the satisfaction of*  
*others, but rather their unnecessary understanding, who, like*  
295 *Sancho Panca's Doctor, prescribe too strictly to our appetites;*  
*for, says he, in the difference of Tragedy and Comedy, and of*  
*Farce itself, there can be no determination but by the taste, nor*  
*in the manner of their composure.*

We shall see him now as great a Critick as he was a Poet,  
and the reason why he excell'd so much in Poetry will be  
300 evident, for it will appear to have proceeded from the  
exactness of his judgment. *In the difference of Tragedy,*  
*Comedy, and Farce it self, there can be no determination but by*  
*the taste.* I will not quarrel with the obscurity of his Phrase,  
though I justly might; but beg his pardon if I do not rightly  
305 understand him: if he means that there is no essential difference  
betwixt *Comedy, Tragedy, and Farce*, but what is only  
made by the peoples taste, which distinguishes one of them  
from the other, that is so manifest an Errour that I need not  
lose time to contradict it. Were there neither Judge, Taste,  
310 nor Opinion in the world, yet they would differ in their  
natures; for the action, character, and language of *Tragedy*,  
would still be great and high; that of *Comedy* lower and  
more familiar; Admiration would be the Delight of one,  
and Satyr of the other.

315 I have but briefly touch'd upon these things, because,  
whatever his words are, I can scarce imagine, that *he who is*  
*always concern'd for the true honour of reason, and would have no*  
*spurious issue father'd upon her*, should mean any thing so  
absurd as to affirm, that *there is no difference betwixt Comedy*  
320 *and Tragedy but what is made by the taste only: Unless he would*  
have us understand the Comedies of my Lord L. where the

first Act should be Pottages, the second Fricasses, &c. and the Fifth, a *Chere Entiere* of Women.

I rather guess he means, that betwixt one *Comedy* or *Tragedy* and another, there is no other difference but what 325  
is made by the liking or disliking of the Audience. This is indeed a less error than the former, but yet it is a great one. The liking or disliking of the people gives the Play the denomination of good or bad, but does not really make, or constitute it such. To please the people ought to be the Poets 330  
aim, because Plays are made for their delight; but it does not follow that they are always pleas'd with good Plays, or that the Plays which please them are always good. The humour of the people is now for *Comedy*, therefore in hope to please them, I write *Comedies* rather than serious Plays: and 335  
so far their taste prescribes to me: but it does not follow from that reason, that *Comedy* is to be prefer'd before *Tragedy* in its own nature: for that which is so in its own nature cannot be otherwise; as a man cannot but be a rational creature: but the opinion of the people may alter, and in another Age, or 340  
perhaps in this, serious Plays may be set up above *Comedies*.

This I think a sufficient Answer; if it be not, he has provided me of an Excuse; it seems in his wisdom, he foresaw my weakness, and has found out this expedient for me. That it is not necessary for Poets to study strict reason, since they 345  
are so used to a greater latitude than is allowed by that severe inquisition; that they must infringe their own jurisdiction to profess themselves oblig'd to argue well.

I am obliged to him for discovering to me this back door; but I am not yet resolv'd on my retreat: For I am of opinion 350  
that they cannot be good Poets who are not accustomed to argue well. False Reasonings and colours of Speech, are the certain marks of one who does not understand the Stage: For Moral Truth is the Mistress of the Poet as much as of the

355 Philosopher: Poesie must resemble Natural Truth, but it must *be* Ethical. Indeed the Poet dresses Truth, and adorns Nature, but does not alter them:

Ficta voluptatis causâ sint proxima veris.

Therefore that is not the best Poesie which resembles notions  
 360 of things that are not, to things that are: though the fancy may be great and the words flowing, yet the Soul is but half satisfied when there is not Truth in the foundation. This is that which makes *Virgil* be preferred before the rest of Poets: In variety of fancy and sweetness of expression, you  
 365 see *Ovid* far above him: for *Virgil* rejected many of those things which *Ovid* wrote. *A great Wits great Work is to refuse*, as my worthy Friend Sir *John Berkenhead* has ingeniously express'd it: you rarely meet with any thing in *Virgil* but Truth, which therefore leaves the strongest impression of  
 370 pleasure in the Soul. This I thought my self oblig'd to say in behalf of Poesie: and to declare, though it be against my self, that when Poets do not argue well, the defect is in the Work-men, not in the Art.

And now I come to the boldest part of his Discourse,  
 375 wherein he attacques not me, but all the Ancients and Moderns; and undermines, as he thinks, the very foundations on which Dramatique Poesie is built. I could wish he would have declin'd that envy which must of necessity follow such an undertaking, and contented himself with  
 380 triumphing over me in my opinions of Verse, which I will never hereafter dispute with him; but he must pardon me if I have that Veneration for *Aristotle*, *Horace*, *Ben. Johnson*, and *Corneille*, that I dare not serve him in such a Cause, and against such Heroes, but rather fight under their protection,  
 385 as *Homer* reports of little *Teucer*, who shot the Trojans from under the large Buckler of *Ajax Telamon*.

Στῆ δ' ἄρ' ὑπ' Αἴαντος σάκέϊ Τελαμωνιάδῳ, &c.  
 He stood beneath his Brothers ample shield;  
 And, cover'd there, shot death through all the field.

The words of my noble Adversary are these:

390

*But if we examine the general Rules laid down for Plays by strict reason, we shall find the errors equally gross; for the great foundation which is laid to build upon, is nothing as it is generally stated, as will appear upon the examination of the Particulars.*

These Particulars in due time shall be examin'd: in the 395  
 mean while let us consider what this great foundation is,  
 which he says is nothing, as it is generally stated. I never  
 heard of any other foundation of Dramatique Poesie than  
 the imitation of Nature; neither was there ever pretended  
 any other by the Ancients or Moderns, or me, who en- 400  
 deavour to follow them in that Rule. This I have plainly  
 said in my definition of a Play; that it is a just and lively  
 image of humane Nature, &c. Thus the Foundation, as it is  
 generally stated, will stand sure, if this definition of a Play  
 be true; if it be not, he ought to have made his exception 405  
 against it, by proving that a Play is not an imitation of  
 Nature, but somewhat else which he is pleas'd to think it.

But 'tis very plain, that he has mistaken the foundation for  
 that which is built upon it, though not immediately: for the  
 direct and immediate consequence is this; if Nature be to be 410  
 imitated, then there is a Rule for imitating Nature rightly,  
 otherwise there may be an end, and no means conducing to  
 it. Hitherto I have proceeded by demonstration; but as our  
 Divines, when they have prov'd a Deity, because there is  
 order, and have infer'd that this Deity ought to be wor- 415  
 shipped, differ afterwards in the manner of the Worship; so  
 having laid down, that Nature is to be imitated, and that  
 Proposition proving the next, that then there are means

which conduce to the imitating of Nature, I dare proceed no  
420 farther positively: but have only laid down some opinions  
of the Ancients and Moderns, and of my own, as means  
which they used, and which I thought probable for the  
attaining of that end. Those means are the same which my  
Antagonist calls the Foundations, how properly the world  
425 may judge; and to prove that this is his meaning, he clears it  
immediately to you, by enumerating those Rules or Pro-  
positions against which he makes his particular exceptions;  
as namely, those of time and place, in these words: *First we  
are told the plot should not be so ridiculously contrived, as to  
430 crowd two several Countries into one Stage; secondly, to cramp  
the Accidents of many years or days into the representation  
of two hours and an half; and lastly, a Conclusion drawn,  
that the only remaining Dispute is, concerning time, whether it  
should be contained in 12 or 24 hours; and the place to be limited  
435 to that spot of ground where the Play is supposed to begin: and  
this is called nearest Nature; for that is concluded most natural,  
which is most probable, and nearest to that which it presents.*

Thus he has only made a small mistake of the means  
conducing to the end, for the end it self, and of the super-  
440 structure for the foundation: but he proceeds. *To shew there-  
fore upon what ill grounds they dictate Laws for Dramatique  
Poesie, &c.* He is here pleased to charge me with being  
Magisterial, as he has done in many other places of his  
Preface. Therefore in vindication of my self, I must crave  
445 leave to say, that my whole Discourse was Sceptical, accord-  
ing to that way of reasoning which was used by *Socrates,  
Plato*, and all the *Academiques* of old, which *Tully* and the  
best of the Ancients followed, and which is imitated by the  
modest Inquisitions of the Royal Society. That it is so, not  
450 only the name will shew, which is *an Essay*, but the frame  
and Composition of the Work. You see it is a Dialogue

sustain'd by persons of several opinions, all of them left doubtful, to be determined by the Readers in general; and more particularly defer'd to the accurate Judgment of my Lord *Buckhurst*, to whom I made a Dedication of my Book. 455  
These are my words in my Epistle, speaking of the persons whom I introduc'd in my Dialogue: 'Tis true they differ'd in their opinions, as 'tis probable they would; neither do I take upon me to reconcile, but to relate them, leaving your Lordship to decide it in favour of that part 460  
which you shall judge most reasonable. And after that in my Advertisement to the Reader I said this; The drift of the ensuing Discourse is chiefly to vindicate the Honour of our English Writers from the Censure of those who unjustly prefer the French before them. This I intimate, lest any 465  
should think me so exceeding vain, as to teach others an Art which they understand much better than my self. But this is more than necessary to clear my modesty in that point: & I am very confident that there is scarce any man who has lost so much time, as to read that trifle, but will be 470  
my Compurgator as to that arrogance whereof I am accus'd. The truth is, if I had been naturally guilty of so much vanity as to dictate my opinions; yet I do not find that the Character of a positive or self-conccited person is of such advantage to any in this Age, that I should labour to be 475  
publickly admitted of that Order.

But I am not now to defend my own Cause, when that of all the Ancients and Moderns is in question: for this Gentleman who accuses me of arrogance, has taken a course not to be taxed with the other extream of modesty. Those 480  
propositions which are laid down in my Discourse as helps to the better imitation of Nature, are not mine (as I have said) nor were ever pretended so to be, but derived from the Authority of *Aristotle* and *Horace*, and from the Rules and

485 Examples of Ben. Johnson and Corneille. These are the men with whom properly he contends, and against whom he will endeavour to make it evident, that there is no such thing as what they All pretend.

His Argument against the Unities of place and time, is  
490 this; *That 'tis as impossible for one Stage to present two Rooms or Houses truly, as two Countries or Kingdoms: & as impossible that five hours or twenty four hours should be two hours, as that a thousand hours or years should be less than what they are, or the greatest part of time to be comprehended in the less: for all of them*  
495 *being impossible, they are none of them nearest the Truth or Nature of what they present; for impossibilities are all equal and admit of no degree.*

This Argument is so scattered into parts, that it can scarce be united into a Syllogism; yet, in obedience to him, I will  
500 abbreviate and comprehend as much of it as I can in few words, that my Answer to it may be more perspicuous. I conceive his meaning to be what follows as to the unity of place: (if I mistake, I beg his pardon, professing it is not out of any design to play the *Argumentative Poet*). If one Stage  
505 cannot properly present two Rooms or Houses, much less two Countries or Kingdoms, then there can be no Unity of place: but one Stage cannot properly perform this; therefore there can be no Unity of place.

I plainly deny his minor Proposition; the force of which,  
510 if I mistake not, depends on this; that the Stage being one place, cannot be two. This indeed is as great a Secret, as that we are all mortal; but to requite it with another, I must crave leave to tell him, that though the Stage cannot be two places, yet it may properly represent them, successively, or  
515 at several times. His Argument is indeed no more than a meer fallacy, which will evidently appear when we distinguish place, as it relates to Plays, into real and imaginary. The

real place is that Theater, or piece of ground on which the Play is acted. The imaginary, that House, Town, or Country where the action of the *Drama* is supposed to be; or more plainly, where the Scene of the Play is laid. Let us now apply this to that Herculean Argument, *which if strictly and duely weighed, is to make it evident, that there is no such thing as what they all pretend.* 'Tis impossible, he says, for one Stage to present two Rooms or Houses: I answer, 'tis neither impossible, nor improper, for one real place to represent two or more imaginary places, so it be done successively, which in other words is no more than this; That the imagination of the Audience, aided by the words of the Poet, and painted Scenes, may suppose the Stage to be sometimes one place, sometimes another, now a Garden, or Wood, and immediately a Camp: which I appeal to every mans imagination, if it be not true. Neither the Ancients nor Moderns, as much Fools as he is pleased to think them, ever asserted that they could make one place two; but they might hope by the good leave of this Author, that the change of a Scene might lead the imagination to suppose the place alter'd: So that he cannot fasten those absurdities upon this Scene of a Play, or imaginary place of Action, that it is one place and yet two. And this being so clearly proved, that 'tis past any shew of a reasonable denial, it will not be hard to destroy that other part of his Argument which depends upon it, namely, that 'tis as impossible for a Stage to represent two Rooms or Houses, as two Countries or Kingdoms: for his reason is already overthrown, which was, because both were alike impossible. This is manifestly otherwise; for 'tis proved, that a Stage may properly represent two Rooms or Houses; for the imagination being Judge of what is represented, will in reason be less chocqu'd with the appearance of two rooms in the same house, or two houses in the same City, than with

two distant Cities in the same Country, or two remote Countries in the same Universe. Imagination in a man, or reasonable Creature, is supposed to participate of reason, and when that governs, as it does in the belief of fiction, reason is not destroyed, but misled, or blinded: that can prescribe to the reason, during the time of the representation, somewhat like a weak belief of what it sees and hears; and reason suffers it self to be so hood-wink'd, that it may better enjoy the pleasures of the fiction: but it is never so wholly made a captive, as to be drawn head-long into a perswasion of those things which are most remote from probability: 'tis in that case a free-born Subject, not a Slave, it will contribute willingly its assent, as far as it sees convenient, but will not be forc'd. Now there is a greater vicinity in Nature, betwixt two Rooms than betwixt two Houses, betwixt two Houses than betwixt two Cities, and so of the rest: reason therefore can sooner be led by imagination to step from one room into another, than to walk to two distant houses, and yet rather to go thither, than to flye like a Witch through the Air, and be hurried from one Region to another. Fancy and Reason go hand in hand, the first cannot leave the last behind; and though Fancy, when it sees the wide Gulph, would venture over, as the nimbler; yet it is with-held by Reason, which will refuse to take the leap, when the distance over it appears too large. If *Ben. Johnson* himself will remove the Scene from Rome into *Tuscany* in the same Act, and from thence return to *Rome*, in the Scene which immediately follows; reason will consider there is no proportionable allowance of time to perform the journey, and therefore will chuse to stay at home. So then the less change of place there is, the less time is taken up in transporting the persons of the *Drama*, with Analogy to reason; and in that Analogy, or resemblance of Fiction to Truth, consists the excellency of the Play.

For what else concerns the Unity of place, I have already given my opinion of it in my *Essay*, that there is a latitude to be allowed to it, as several places in the same Town or City, or places adjacent to each other in the same Country; which may all be comprehended under the larger denomination of one place; yet with this restriction, that the nearer and fewer those imaginary places are, the greater resemblance they will have to Truth: and Reason which cannot make them one, will be more easily led to suppose them so.

What has been said of the Unity of place, may easily be applied to that of time: I grant it to be impossible, that the greater part of time should be comprehended in the less, that twenty four hours should be crowded into three: but there is no necessity of that Supposition. For as *Place*, so *Time* relating to a Play, is either imaginary or real: The real is comprehended in those three hours, more or less, in the space of which the Play is represented: The imaginary is that which is supposed to be taken up in the Representation, as twenty four hours more or less. Now no man ever could suppose that twenty four real hours could be included in the space of three: but where is the absurdity of affirming that the feigned business of twenty four imagin'd hours, may not more naturally be represented in the compass of three real hours, than the like feigned business of twenty four years in the same proportion of real time? For the proportions are always real, and much nearer, by his permission, of twenty four to three, than of four thousand to it.

I am almost fearful of illustrating any thing by similitude, lest he should confute it for an Argument; yet I think the comparison of a Glass will discover very aptly the fallacy of his Argument, both concerning time and place. The strength of his Reason depends on this, That the less cannot comprehend the greater. I have already answered, that we need not

suppose it does; I say not that the less can comprehend the greater, but only that it may represent it: As in a Glass or Mirrour of half a yard Diameter, a whole room and many  
620 persons in it may be seen at once: not that it can comprehend that room or those persons, but that it represents them to the sight.

But the Author of the *Duke of Lerma* is to be excus'd for his declaring against the Unity of time: for if I be not much  
625 mistaken, he is an interested person; the time of that Play taking up so many years as the favour of the Duke of *Lerma* continued; nay, the second and third Act including all the time of his Prosperity, which was a great part of the Reign of *Philip* the Third: for in the beginning of the second Act  
630 he was not yet a Favourite, and before the end of the third, was in disgrace. I say not this with the least design of limiting the Stage too servilely to 24 hours, however he be pleased to tax me with dogmatizing in that point. In my Dialogue, as I before hinted, several persons maintained their several  
635 opinions: one of them, indeed, who supported the Cause of the French Poesie, said how strict they were in that Particular: but he who answered in behalf of our Nation, was willing to give more latitude to the Rule; and cites the words of *Corneille* himself, complaining against the severity  
640 of it, and observing what Beauties it banish'd from the Stage, pag. 44. of my *Essay*. In few words my own opinion is this, (and I willingly submit it to my Adversary, when he will please impartially to consider it,) that the imaginary time of every Play ought to be contrived into as narrow a  
645 compass, as the nature of the Plot, the quality of the Persons, and variety of Accidents will allow. In Comedy I would not exceed 24 or 30 hours: for the Plot, Accidents, and Persons of Comedy are small, and may be naturally turn'd in a little compass: But in Tragedy the Design is weighty, and the

Persons great, therefore there will naturally be required a  
 greater space of time in which to move them. And this,  
 though *Ben. Johnson* has not told us, yet 'tis manifestly his  
 opinion: for you see that to his Comedies he allows gener-  
 ally but 24 hours; to his two Tragedies, *Sejanus* and *Catiline*,  
 a much larger time: though he draws both of them into as  
 narrow a compass as he can: For he shews you only the latter  
 end of *Sejanus* his Favour, and the Conspiracy of *Catiline*  
 already ripe, and just breaking out into action.

But as it is an error on the one side, to make too great a  
 disproportion betwixt the imaginary time of the Play, and  
 the real time of its representation; so on the other side, 'tis  
 an oversight to compress the accidents of a Play into a  
 narrower compass than that in which they could naturally  
 be produc'd. Of this last error the French are seldom  
 guilty, because the thinness of their Plots prevents them  
 from it: but few English men, except *Ben. Johnson*, have  
 ever made a Plot with variety of design in it, included in 24  
 hours which was altogether natural. For this reason, I prefer  
 the *Silent Woman* before all other Plays, I think justly, as I do  
 its Author in Judgment, above all other Poets. Yet of the  
 two, I think that error the most pardonable, which in too  
 straight a compass crowds together many accidents, since it  
 produces more variety, and consequently more pleasure to  
 the Audience: and because the nearness of proportion  
 betwixt the imaginary and real time, does speciously cover  
 the compression of the Accidents.

Thus I have endeavoured to answer the meaning of his  
 Argument; for as he drew it, I humbly conceive that it was  
 none: as will appear by his Proposition, and the proof of it.  
 His Proposition was this.

*If strictly and duely weighed, 'tis as impossible for one Stage to  
 present two Rooms or Houses, as two Countries or Kingdoms,*

*Ec.* And his Proof this: For all being impossible, they are none of them nearest the Truth or Nature of what they present.

685 Here you see, instead of a Proof or Reason, there is only a *Petitio principii*: for in plain words, his sense is this; Two things are as impossible as one another, because they are both equally impossible: but he takes those two things to be granted as impossible, which he ought to have prov'd such  
690 before he had proceeded to prove them equally impossible: he should have made out first that it was impossible for one Stage to represent two Houses, & then have gone forward to prove that it was as equally impossible for a Stage to present two Houses, as two Countries.

695 After all this, the very absurdity to which he would reduce me, is none at all: for he only drives at this, That if his Argument be true, I must then acknowledge that there are degrees in impossibilities, which I easily grant him without dispute: and if I mistake not, *Aristotle* and the *School* are of  
700 my opinion. For there are some things which are absolutely impossible, and others which are only so *ex parte*; as 'tis absolutely impossible for a thing to be, and not be at the same time; but for a Stone to move naturally upward, is only impossible *ex parte materiæ*; but it is not impossible for the  
705 first Mover, to alter the Nature of it.

His last Assault, like that of a French man, is most feeble: for whereas I have observed, that none have been violent against Verse, but such only as have not attempted it, or have succeeded ill in their attempt, he will needs, according to his  
710 usual custom, improve my Observation to an Argument, that he might have the glory to confute it. But I lay my Observation at his feet, as I do my Pen, which I have often employ'd willingly in his deserved commendations, and now most unwillingly against his Judgment. For his person  
715 and parts, I honour them as much as any man living, and

have had so many particular Obligations to him, that I should be very ungrateful, if I did not acknowledge them to the World. But I gave not the first occasion of this difference in opinions. In my Epistle Dedicatory, before my *Rival Ladies*, I had said somewhat in behalf of Verse, which he 720 was pleased to answer in his Preface to his *Plays*: that occasioned my Reply in my *Essay*, and that Reply begot this rejoinder of his in his Preface to the *Duke of Lerma*. But as I was the last who took up Arms, I will be the first to lay them down. For what I have here written, I submit it wholly to 725 him; and if I do not hereafter answer what may be objected against this Paper, I hope the World will not impute it to any other reason, than only the due respect which I have for so noble an Opponent.

## NOTES

### Of Dramatick Poesie, AN ESSAY

p. 29. *Buckhurst*] Charles Sackville (1638-1706) became Earl of Middlesex in 1675 and of Dorset in 1677, and it is difficult to account for the omission of his titles from the 1684 edition. He was Lord Chamberlain, 1689-97. Though he was present at the battle, 3 June 1665, which is the imagined occasion of the dialogue in the *Essay*, Buckhurst has confidently been identified with Eugenius. For another expression of Dryden's feelings towards him see the *Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire* (1693) which is also addressed to him.

p. 29, l. 5. *Plague*] The Great Plague of 1665; the theatres were closed May 1665-Nov. 1666. Dryden spent this period at the home of his father-in-law, the Earl of Berkshire, at Charlton Park, near Malmesbury, Wilts.

p. 29, l. 10. *not a little alter'd*] The textual change prepares the way for the numerous alterations in the 1684 edition, but also recalls that by this date Dryden's views had undergone serious modification. The *Prologue* to his heroic play, *Aureng-Zebe* (1676), announces that the author 'Grows weary of his long-loved mistress, Rhyme' (Watson, I, 192); by 1678, in *All for Love*, he has 'disencumbered himself from rhyme' (as the Preface to the play points out).

p. 30, l. 24. *its defence*] The title page of *Pompey the Great: a Tragedy* (1664) announces that the original—Pierre Corneille's *La Mort de Pompée* (1644)—was 'translated out of French by Certain Persons of Honour'. In addition to Buckhurst, these included Godolphin, Edmund Waller, and Sir Charles Sedley (Dryden's *Lisideius*); Buckhurst was presumably responsible for Act IV in particular.

p. 30, l. 33. *Spurina*] See Valerius Maximus, *De Verecundia*, IV, 5.

p. 30, l. 40. *Pars . . . cubilia*] Horace, *Epodes*, XVI, 37-38 ('. . . *exspes . . .*'): 'the part better than the unteachable mob; the weakling and the faint-heart may remain on their unlucky beds.'

p. 30, l. 46. *allow'd*] i.e. approved.

p. 31, l. 54. *Le jeune . . . passage*] Untraced: perhaps a sample of *vers de société*.

p. 31, l. 70. *As Nature . . . sing*] Sir William Davenant, *Poem to the King's most Sacred Majesty* (1663). (Davenant's *Works* (1672), p. 268, gives 'So Nature . . . With Beautious blossoms. . .')

p. 31, l. 79 *Homer . . . fighting Men*] *Iliad*, xvi.

p. 32, l. 86. *made publick*] In the Dedication to the *Rival Ladies* (1664) where Dryden expounds the advantages of rhyme over blank verse.

p. 32, l. 96. *Candour*] Associated with 'good nature' or 'beneficence'. See *Discourse concerning . . . Satire* (Watson, II, 74).

p. 32, l. 98. *Dialogues*] Cicero, *De Legibus*. The remark about Tully and Atticus would apply in some degree to Dryden and Howard.

p. 32, l. 99. *Confident*] The word appears as 'confidant' in Dryden's Preface to *Ovid's Epistles* (1680), (Watson, I, 264).

p. 32, l. 105 *praise Cicero*] Cicero, *Ad Atticum*, XII, 40; Plutarch, *Life of Julius Caesar*, LIV,

p. 33, l. 117. *Sine . . . irā*] Tacitus, *Annals*, I, I ('sine ira et studio, quorum causas procul habeo'): 'without party spirit or anger.'

p. 35, l. 3. *This . . . my self*] The prominence given to Neander's views belies this disclaimer.

p. 35, l. 4. *exceeding vain*] Adverbial use of adjectives was common in Dryden's day. Cf. 'extream elaborate' p. 94, l. 1780, 'extream ignorant' (*Defence*, p. 126, l. 49).

p. 35, l. 7. *I promise . . . way*] Dryden never formally carried out his promise.

p. 35, l. 1. *memorable day*] The battle took place off Harwich, 3 June 1665.

p. 35, l. 1. *late War*] The war was concluded by the Treaty of Breda, July 1667. Since the *Essay* was entered in the Stationers' Register in August 1667 this phrase must represent a late revision.

p. 35, l. 8. *Royal Highness*] James, Duke of York, later James II.

p. 35, l. 10. *the noise . . . City*] Cf. Samuel Pepys, *Diary*, 3 June 1665: 'All this day, by all people upon the River, and almost every where else hereabout, were heard the guns, our two fleets for certain being engaged; which was confirmed by letters from Harwich . . . and all our hearts full of concernment for the Duke.'

p. 36, l. 17. *Eugenius . . . Neander*] See Introduction pp. 10-11.

p. 36, l. 39. *congratulated to*] An obsolete seventeenth-century construction.

p. 37, l. 70 *sedition Preachers*] Probably a reference to the Conventicle Act, 1664, 'to prevent and suppress seditious and unlawful conventicles'.

p. 38, l. 75. *Quem . . . scriberet*] Cicero, *Pro Archia Poeta*, x, 25 ('*Quem nos in contione . . .*'): 'We have seen him at a public meeting when some poetaster from the crowd handed up a paper containing an epigram on himself, improvised in somewhat unmetrical elegiacs. Sulla immediately ordered a reward to be paid him out of the proceeds of the sale which he was holding, but added the stipulation that he should never write again.'

p. 38, l. 83. *two Poets*] Most likely a reference to two poets who had already written poems on the battle: Robert Wild (1609-79), author of *An Essay upon the Late Victory* (1665) and Richard Flecknoe (c. 1620-78) who had 'some advantage of education and converse', but remained a dull poet. He also addressed a poem to the Duke of York on his victory.

p. 38, l. 87. *clenches*] i.e. puns, described by Dryden in the *Defence of the Epilogue* (1672) as 'the lowest and most grovelling kind of wit' (Watson, I, 179).

p. 38, l. 89. *Catacrexis*] i.e. improper use of a word.

p. 38, l. 89 *Clevelandism*] a term derived from the metaphysical extravagances of John Cleveland (1613-58) whose tortured poetry is later censured by Eugenius (see pp. 59-60).

p. 39, l. 108. *he creeps . . . line*] Probably the source of Pope's couplet, *Essay on Criticism* (1711), II. 346-7:

While expletives their feeble aid do join,  
And ten low words oft creep in one dull line.

p. 39, l. 115. *Pauper . . . pauper*] *Epigrams*, viii, 19: 'Cinna wishes to

seem poor, and indeed is poor' (i.e. the surest way to become poor is to appear so).

p. 39, l. 123. *stoop*] i.e. swoop down. Cf. Dryden's translation of Virgil's *Georgics*, iv, 74-76:

'The winged Nation wanders thro' the Skies  
... Then stooping on the Meads and leafy Bow'rs;  
They skim the Floods ...'

Pope also 'stoop'd to Truth, and moraliz'd his song' (*Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, l. 341).

p. 39, l. 132. *Withers*] George Wither (1588-1667), a Puritan poet who was the object of Tory ridicule on account of his paltry but prolific versifying. Cf. Butler, *Hudibras*, I, i, 645ff.; Pope, *Dunciad*, I, 296.

p. 40, l. 135. *famous Poem*] May refer to Robert Wild's *Iter Boreale: Attempting Something upon the Successful March of General Monck*, published April 1660.

p. 40, l. 136. *Change-time*] The time at which merchants met for the transaction of business.

p. 40, l. 138. *Candles ends*] A piece of candle was lighted at an auction sale; bidding ceased when the candle burned out.

p. 40, l. 144. *qui Bavium . . . &c.*] Virgil, *Eclogues*, III, 90 ('*Qui Bavium non odit, amet tua carmina, Maevi*'): 'Let him who does not hate Bavus, love your songs Maevis.'

p. 40, l. 147. *Nam . . . contemnimus*] Quotation untraced: 'For we despise those who praise such as we despise'.

p. 40, l. 153. *Pace . . . perdidistis*] *Satyricon*, II, i: 'With your permission, I must tell you the truth that you [teachers] have been the ruin of true eloquence.'

p. 41, l. 168. *Indignor . . . nuper*] *Epistles*, II, i, 76-77: 'I am angry when any work is censured, not because it is thought to be coarse or inelegant in style, but because it is modern.'

p. 41, l. 171. *Si . . . annus*] *Ibid*, II, i, 34-35: 'If poems are like wine that time improves, I should like to know which year gives fresh value to literature.'

p. 41, l. 185. *not difficult . . . ours*] Though Sir Robert Howard (in his Preface to *Four New Plays*, 1665) speaks of the 'want of abilities in this age' compared with the preceding, in the matter of presenting rather than relating dramatic action he insists that, relative to classical drama, 'our English plays justly challenge the preeminence'.

p. 42, l. 198. *many now living*] Of the writers he goes on to mention, Suckling had died in 1642 and Cowley died in July 1667; he could not include Milton's writing in 'the Epique way' since *Paradise Lost* (published August–September 1667) appeared almost simultaneously with Dryden's *Essay*.

p. 42, l. 206. *wholly ours*] This final phrase recalls Quintilian's 'Satira quidem tota nostra est' which Dryden quotes in his *Discourse concerning . . . Satire* (Watson, II, 104).

p. 43, l. 238. *not altogether perfect*] Imperfect because the definition lacks a *differentia* and is thus imprecise. As Neander observes later, it defines the *genus* and the end of epic as well as those of drama (see p. 109).

p. 44, l. 259. *Philosophy*] i.e. natural science.

p. 44, l. 261. *the School*] i.e. scholastic philosophers and theologians collectively—the 'schoolmen' (such as Abelard, Aquinas, Duns Scotus) whose teaching in the medieval 'schools' or universities was based on Aristotle and the Christian Fathers.

p. 44, l. 282. *Alit . . . accendit*] *Historia Romana*, I, 17.

p. 45, l. 314. *Of that . . . him*] Aristotle's *Poetics* remains only in the part treating of tragedy; the discussion of epic and comedy is not extant.

p. 46, l. 318. *Out of . . . Action*] Aristotle was not responsible for legislating on the three unities; he insisted on the importance of the unity of action and mentioned the desirability of restricting the time-scale of a play to approximately 'a single revolution of the sun', but said nothing of the unity of place. Castelvetro, in his translation of the *Poetics* (1570), was the first to 'extract' the three unities, thereby initiating a tradition which was not effectively challenged until Johnson's *Preface to Shakespeare* (1765). Dryden's French term comes from Corneille's *Discours des Trois Unités* (1660). Watson points out that this is the first recorded application of the word 'unity' to the 'rules'.

p. 48, l. 380. *Liaison des Scenes*] The phrase which Dryden was later to render 'an order and connection of all the scenes' (Preface to *Troilus and Cressida* (1679), Watson, I, 240), he found in the *Discours des Trois Unités*: 'La liaison des scènes qui unit toutes les actions particulières de chaque acte l'une avec l'autre' (*Œuvres de P. Corneille*, ed. Marty Laveaux, Paris, n.d., I, 101). 'Un acteur occupant une fois le théâtre, aucun n'y doit entrer qui n'ait sujet de parler à lui . . . Surtout lorsqu'un acteur entre deux fois dans un acte, . . . il doit absolument ou faire juger qu'il reviendra bientôt quand il sort la première fois, . . . ou donner raison en rentrant pourquoi il revient sitôt' (*Œuvres*, I, 109).

p. 48, l. 396. *Discoveries*] *Timber: or Discoveries* (1640): 'Now, that it should be one, and intire. One is considerable two waies: either, as it is only separate, and by it self: or as being compos'd of many parts, it begins to be one, as those parts grow, or are wrought together . . . as a house, consisting of diverse materials, becomes one structure, and one dwelling; so an Action, compos'd of diverse parts, may become one Fable Epicke, or Dramaticke' (*Works*, ed. Herford and Simpson, VIII (1947), 647-8).

p. 48, l. 398. *under-plots*] O.E.D. records this as the earliest usage of the term.

p. 48, l. 402. *Corneille*] In *Discours des Trois Unités*: 'Il n'y doit avoir qu'une action complète, qui laisse l'esprit de l'auditeur dans le calme; mais elle ne peut le devenir que par plusieurs autres imparfaites, qui lui servent d'acheminements, et tiennent cet auditeur dans une agréable suspension' (*Œuvres*, I, 99).

p. 49, l. 422. *Half-Menander*] See Suetonius, *Vita Terentii* (preserved by Donatus). Caesar expressed the view that Terence was only half as great as Menander.

p. 49, l. 423. *Varius . . . Paternulus*] See Horace, *Odes*, I, 6; *Satires*, I, ix, 23, I, x, 44; *Ars Poetica*, l. 55. Martial, *Epigrams*, VIII, xviii, 7. No references in Velleius.

p. 49, l. 437. *Macrobius*] In *Conviviorum Saturnaliorum libri septem* (c. A.D. 400), bk. IV.

p. 50, l. 446. *He . . . of Horace*] Jonson's work contains countless references to, imitations and translations of, Horace whom he considered

'an Author of much Civilitie; and . . . the best master, both of vertue, and wisdom' (Herford and Simpson, viii, 642).

p. 50, l. 447. *learned Plagiary*] The term should not be understood with its nineteenth-century critical rigour, but seen in conjunction with Dryden's later remark (pp. 89-90) that Jonson 'borrow'd boldly' from the ancients; 'he invades Authors like a Monarch, and what would be theft in other Poets, is only victory in him'.

p. 50, l. 452. *since . . . for him*] Howard is speaking fully in character here. In the Preface to *Four New Plays* he makes several complimentary references to Jonson and his 'never-to-be-equalled comedies'.

p. 50, l. 453. *Eugenius . . . other Poets*] Buckhurst had very recently written an eulogistic epilogue for a revival of Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour*. (For the text see *The Works of the Most Celebrated Minor Poets*, 1749).

p. 51, l. 493. *Audita . . . credimus*] *Historia Romana*, II, 92 (*admiratione* should read *eneratione*): 'We are more inclined to praise what we have heard than what has happened before our eyes; we regard the present with envy, the past with admiration, and believe that we are eclipsed by the former but derive instruction from the latter.'

p. 52, l. 507. *Aristotle . . . four*] Dryden is in error here. While Aristotle gives four divisions of tragedy (*Poetics*, XII)—prologue, episode, exodos, and choric song—the parts named by Dryden do not appear in his work. The principal source for them was J. C. Scaliger's *Poetices* (1561).

p. 52, l. 515. *Counterturn*] Cf. Dryden's *Heads of an Answer to Rymer* (1677): 'if the action be but one, and that plain, without any counterturn of design or episode, i.e. under-plot, how can it be so pleasing as the English, which have both under-plot and a turned design, which keeps the audience in expectation of the catastrophe? whereas in the Greek poets we see through the whole design at first' (Watson, I, 216). As Watson suggests, the addition of the term *Status* in 1684 may point to Dryden's having read Scaliger (from whom it derives) between the two editions of the *Essay*.

p. 52, l. 530. *what Poet . . . actu*] Dryden's problem is still unresolved. Horace's 'rule' applies not only to comedies but to all plays; he stated it in *Ars Poetica*, l. 189—'Neve minor neu sit quinto production actu'—'Let no play be either shorter or longer than five acts.'

p. 53, l. 539. *three Acts . . . Jornadas*] Lope de Vega (1562-1635) was chiefly responsible for the adoption of the three-act structure, but *Jornada* is not found in his MSS. He used the word *acto*. *Jornada* is common in Old Spanish from the thirteenth century, meaning 'duration of a day', but its first use in the sense of 'an act in a play' dates from c. 1517 (in the work of Torres Naharro). After Lope de Vega (who had preferred *acto*) the term *jornada* was brought back into fashion by Calderón and his followers. (See J. H. Terbingen, *Los Italianismos en Español*, Amsterdam, 1943, pp. 100-101.)

In *Troisième Discours* Corneille had remarked: 'Aristotle n'en prescrit point le nombre; Horace le borne à cinq; et bien qu'il défende d'y en mettre moins, les Espagnols s'opiniâtrent à l'arrêter à trois, et les Italiens font souvent la même chose' (*Œuvres*, I, 107).

p. 53, l. 547. *Tò μυθος*] It should read *ὁ μῦθος*.

p. 53, l. 548. *often . . . σύνθεσις*] i.e. the arrangement of the incidents.

p. 53, l. 549. *late Writer . . . Audience*] Howard, in his Preface to *Four New Plays*, comments on the ancients that they chose for the subjects of their plays 'usually the most known stories and fables'.

p. 53, l. 554. *Greeklings*] See Juvenal, *Satires*, III, 78; Cicero, *De Oratore*, I, xxii, 102; Jonson, *Discoveries* (Herford and Simpson, VIII, 641).

p. 54, l. 565, *good cheap*] i.e. on favourable terms, easily. The phrase refers to the state of a market in which conditions favour the buyer; 'cheap' originally meant 'bargaining'.

p. 54, l. 576. *Juno . . . opem*] Terence, *Andria*, III, i, 15; 'Goddess of childbirth, help me.'

p. 54, l. 579. *Machine*] The *deus ex machinâ*, a god brought on to the Greek stage by some mechanical device to resolve a complex dramatic situation. Jonson's scorn for the device is expressed in the Prologue to *Every Man in His Humour*: 'Nor creaking throne comes down, the boyes to please' (Herford and Simpson, III, (1927), 303). Cf. Corneille, *Discours des Trois Unités*: 'Dans le dénouement je trouve deux choses à éviter, le simple changement de volonté, et la machine . . . La machine n'a pas plus d'adresse quand elle ne sert qu'à faire descendre un Dieu pour accommoder toutes choses, sur le point que les acteurs ne savent plus comment les terminer' (*Œuvres*, I, 105-6). Dryden remarks in the Preface

to *The History of Polybius*: 'the poets, when they are at a loss for the solution of a plot, bungle up their catastrophe with a god descending in a machine' (Watson, II, 67-68).

p. 55, l. 607. *till . . . Stage*] The 'rule' derives not from the French but from Castelvetro. In any case Sidney (*Apology for Poetry*, 1595) antedates the 'French poets' with his comment that 'the stage should always represent but one place' (ed. H. A. Needham, n.d., p. 52).

p. 55, l. 610. *His . . . Scaliger*] *Poetices*, vi, iii. Sidney anticipates this comment on Terence though, by mistake, refers to the *Eumuchus* instead of the *Heautontimoroumenos*. See *Apology*, p. 53.

p. 55, l. 614. *for in . . . Verse*] The reference to Euripides is an almost literal translation from Corneille's *Troisième Discours*, one sentence from which Dryden quotes in his next paragraph: 'Euripide, dans les *Suppliants*, fait partir Thésée d' Athènes avec une armée, donner une bataille devant les murs de Thèbes, qui en étoient éloignés de douze ou quinze lieues, et revenir victorieux en l'acte suivant; et depuis qu'il est parti jusqu'à l'arrivée du messager qui vient faire le récit de sa victoire, Ethra et le chœur n'ont que trente-six vers à dire. C'est assez bien employé un temps si court' (*Œuvres*, I, 112). ('employé' is the reading found in the editions of the *Discours* during Corneille's lifetime.)

p. 56, l. 634. *the reason . . . gone off*] The general statement and the particular example from Terence are taken from Corneille's *Troisième Discours*: 'Les anciens ne s'y sont pas toujours assujétis, bien que la plupart de leurs actes ne soient chargés que de deux ou trois scènes; ce qui la rendoit bien plus facile pour eux que pour nous, qui leur en donnons quelquefois jusqu'à neuf ou dix . . . [le] troisième acte de l'*Eunuque*, de Térence, où celle d'Antiphon seul n'a aucune communication avec Chrémès et Pythias, qui sortent du théâtre quand il y entre' (*Œuvres*, I, 101-2).

p. 56, l. 648. *entertainment*] *Eumuchus*, iv, iii.

p. 56, l. 648. *inartificial*] i.e. unskilful, clumsy.

p. 57, l. 671. *Medea*] Euripides' *Medea*.

p. 58, l. 683. *Eurypides, Sophocles*] Dryden is technically correct, although the satyr plays by Euripides (*Cyclops*) and Sophocles (*Ichneutai*) come within the modern conception of comedy.

p. 58, l. 684. *Sock and Buskin*] i.e. *soccus* (the low shoe worn by comic actors) and *cothurnus* (the high, thick-soled boot worn by actors in Athenian tragedy), symbolic of comedy and tragedy respectively. (The etymology of 'buskin' is uncertain.)

p. 58, l. 701. *Tandem . . . triduum*] Terence, *Eunuchus*, II, i, 17-18 ('... si sit opus ...') 'Pray, can't I go without her, if necessary, even for three days running?' The servant replies: 'Phew! Three whole days!'

p. 58, l. 711. *Sed . . . stolidè*] *Ars Poetica*, ll. 270-2 ('At vestri proavi Plautinos . . . ne dicam stulte'): 'Yet our forefathers praised both the verse and the wit of Plautus, being too tolerant, not to say foolish.'

p. 59, l. 717. *Multa . . . loquendi*] *Ibid.*, ll. 70-72 ('... quae iam cecidere ...'): 'Many terms that have fallen out of use shall be born again, and those now in repute shall fall, if usage wills it so, in whose hands lies the judgment, the law and the rule of speech.'

p. 59, l. 724. *Mistake . . . Acantho*] *Eclogues*, IV, 20 ('Mixtaque ...'): 'The Egyptian bean, mixed with the smiling acanthus, will grow abundantly.'

p. 59, l. 726. *Mirantur . . . carinas*] *Aeneid*, VIII, 91-93: 'The waves and grove marvel, startled by the warriors' flashing shields and the painted ships.'

p. 59, l. 730. *Si . . . coeli*] *Metamorphoses*, I, 175-6 ('Si verbis . . . Haud timeam magni dixisse ...'): 'If I may make bold to say it, I would not fear to call [this place] the Palatia of high Heaven.'

p. 59, l. 734. *Et . . . pompas*] *Ibid.*, I, 561: 'and Capitols witness long processions.'

p. 60, l. 751. *Had . . . home*] Cleveland, *The Rebel Scot* (1647), ll. 63-64.

p. 60, l. 753. *Si . . . dixisset*] Juvenal, *Satires*, X, 123-4: 'If only he had always spoken thus.'

p. 60, l. 755. *For . . . destroyes*] Cleveland, *Rupertismus* (1647), ll. 39-40. ('White-powder' is arsenic.)

p. 60, l. 770. *therefore . . . endeavour'd it*] Johnson (*Life of Dryden*, 1779) observes that Dryden could have avoided all this 'gravity of conjecture' and decided the question 'upon surer evidence; for [the *Medea*] is quoted

by Quintilian [*De Institutione Oratoria*, ix, ii, 9] as the work of Seneca; and the only line which remains of Ovid's play, for one line is left us, is not there to be found.' Dryden comments on Ovid's dramatic sense in *An Account of the Ensuing Poem* prefixed to *Annus Mirabilis* (1667), (Watson, i, 99).

p. 61, l. 773. *Omne . . . vincit*] Ovid, *Tristia*, ii, 381: 'Tragedy surpasses every style of writing in elevation.'

p. 61, l. 778. *Troades*] ll. 524ff.

p. 61, l. 794. *Among . . . Plautus*] eg. In *Amphitryo* (of which Dryden published his own version in 1690), especially in some speeches of Alcmena.

p. 61, l. 797. *anima . . . ψυχή*] Juvenal, *Satires*, vi, 195: 'my life and my soul.'

p. 62, l. 821. *Sum . . . notus*] *Aeneid*, i, 378-9 (two half-lines): 'I am the faithful Aeneas, famous throughout the world.'

p. 62, l. 822 *Fanfaron*] i.e. a blusterer or braggart.

p. 62, l. 827. *heartly*] i.e. ready to give unrestrained, vigorous expression to the feelings. (The first use of the word with this meaning recorded by O.E.D. is in 1661.)

p. 62, l. 831. *Si . . . aevum*] *Satires*, i, x, 68 ('. . . dilatus in aevum'): 'if, by fate, he had been born in this age of ours.'

p. 63, l. 837. *Quos . . . sacravit*] Horace, *Epistles*, ii, i, 49 ('quod . . .'): 'whom the Funeral Goddess has hallowed.'

p. 64, l. 865. *Beaumont . . . world*] Beaumont died in 1616, Fletcher in 1625, and Jonson in 1637.

p. 64, l. 870. *it was . . . Theatre*] *L'Academie française* was formed and so named in 1635; under the supervision of Richelieu the Academy required the observance of the three unities and when Corneille's *Le Cid* (first produced 1637) appeared, Richelieu procured a judgement on it from the Academy, partly on the grounds that it failed to conform to the rules. When Dryden speaks of Richelieu's taking the Muses 'into his own protection' he may also refer to 'les cinq auteurs' (of whom

Corneille was one) whom the Cardinal employed to write plays under his direction.

p. 64, l. 876. *prevented*] i.e. anticipated.

p. 64, l. 880. *In . . . compass*] Aristotle's remark that 'tragedy endeavours, as far as possible, to confine its action within the limits of a single revolution of the sun or nearly so', provoked this comment from Corneille in his *Discours des Trois Unités*: 'Ces paroles donnent lieu à cette dispute fameuse, si elles doivent être entendues d'un jour naturel de vingt-quatre heures, ou d'un jour artificiel de douze; ce sont deux opinions dont chacune a des partisans considérables: et pour moi, je trouve qu'il y a des sujets si malaisés à renfermer en si peu de temps, que non-seulement je leur accorderois les vingt-quatre heures entières, mais je me serverois même de la licence que donne ce philosophe de les excéder un peu, et les pousserois sans scrupule jusqu'à trente' (*Œuvres*, I, 111-12). D'Aubignac in his *Pratique du Théâtre* (1657), II, 7, argued for twelve hours.

p. 65, l. 897. *two actions . . . neither*] Howard, in the Preface to *Four New Plays*, makes a similar point: 'When scenes of so different natures immediately succeed one another, 'tis probable the audience may not so suddenly recollect themselves as to start into an enjoyment of the mirth or into a concern for the sadness.' Later (pp. 77-78.) Neander refutes the censure on tragi-comedy though subsequently, in *A Parallel betwixt Painting and Poetry* (1695), Dryden reverts to a critical position close to Howard's (see Watson, II, 202). See also *Spectator*, No. 40 (1711).

p. 65, l. 913. *mal à propos*] In his Dedication to the *Rival Ladies* (1664) Dryden had spoken of the contemporary 'wantonness' in borrowing French words and phrases: 'so long as some affect to speak them, there will not want others who will have the boldness to write them' (Watson, I, 5). Later, in the *Defence of the Epilogue*, he condemned those 'who corrupt our English idiom by mixing it too much with French'. Yet E. A. Horsman ('Dryden's French Borrowings', *Review of English Studies*, N.S., I (1950), 346-51) estimates that Dryden introduced at least forty French borrowings into English and most of them remain in use.

p. 65, l. 916. *Red-Bull*] This (partly) open-air theatre in Clerkenwell had been rebuilt and enlarged c. 1624; it survived frequent raids by government troops during the Commonwealth period, and avoided the

demolition which was the fate of several other theatres. It had a reputation for rowdiness, its actors often being 'terrible teare-throats'.

p. 65, l. 917. *Atque . . . poscunt*] Horace, *Epistles*, II, i, 185-6 ('media inter carmina poscunt/aut ursum aut pugiles'): 'and the vulgar are capable of calling for a bear or for boxers in the middle of a play.'

p. 65, l. 919. *admiration*] Aristotle does not include 'admiration', but only 'pity and fear' (or 'compassion and concernment') in his famous statement (*Poetics*, VI): 'through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions.' Sidney in his *Apology* (ed. Needham, p. 31) had substituted 'admiration' for 'fear' ('admiration and commiseration'). In the *Defence of an Essay* Dryden asserts that 'to move admiration . . . is the delight of serious Plays' (below, p. 128), and later questions whether the arousing of 'pity and terror' is the only means of securing the end of tragedy (*Heads of an Answer to Rymer*, Watson, I, 213). It is in his writing on the epic that the term 'admiration' appears most frequently, as in the Dedication to *Examien Poeticum* (1693): 'to cause admiration is indeed the proper and adequate design of an Epic Poem' (Watson, II, 166). Cf. *A Parallel betwixt Painting and Poetry*, Watson, II, 199.

p. 66, l. 931. *Ex . . . sequar*] *Ars Poetica*, l. 240: 'My aim shall be to create from familiar matter.'

p. 66, l. 939. *Atque . . . inum*] *Ibid.*, ll. 151-2: 'And so does [Homer] invent, so closely does he blend facts and fiction, that the middle is not out of key with the beginning, nor the end with the middle.'

p. 66, l. 945. *success*] i.e. event or outcome (Spanish *suceso*). Cf. Dryden's *Discourse concerning . . . Satire*: 'This was the subject of the tragedy, which being one of those that end with a happy event, is therefore by Aristotle judged below the other sort, whose success is unfortunate' (Watson, II, 102).

p. 66, l. 948. *death of . . . age*] Justinus, a Roman historian who abridged the *Universal History* (chiefly of Greece) by Pompeius Trogus; the reference here is to Justinus, I, 8. Others who give the story of Cyrus are Herodotus (the most reliable), Ctesias, and Xenophon. Dryden's reference to Xenophon is to the *Cyropaedia*, VIII, 7, an historical romance. In his remarks on both Justinus and Xenophon he is following Sidney: ' . . . certainly is more doctrinable [instructive] the feigned Cyrus in

Xenophon than the true Cyrus in Justin' (*Apology*, ed. Needham, p. 20).

p. 67, l. 963. *Perspective*] i.e. telescope.

p. 67, l. 966. *Quodcumque . . . odi*] Horace, *Ars Poetica*, l. 188: 'Whatever you thus show me I disbelieve and abhor.'

p. 67, l. 968. *if not . . . express'd it*] Hesiod, *Theogony*, l. 27; Homer, *Odyssey*, xix, 203: *if not 'the truth' yet 'resembling the truth'*.

p. 67, l. 972. *embarrass*] Watson observes that this is the earliest recorded use of this French borrowing as an English verb.

p. 68, l. 986. *the Plays . . . Plots*] Adaptations from Calderón included the Earl of Bristol's *Elvira; or, The Worst not always true* (produced 1663) which was based on *No siempre lo Peor es Cierto*, and Dryden's own play *An Evening's love: or the Mock Astrologer* (produced 1668) which—as he explains in the Preface (Watson, I, 153)—he took from Thomas Corneille (*Le feint astrologue*) who in his turn had worked from Calderón's *El Astrolgo Fingido*. Sir Samuel Tuke's *Adventures of Five Hours* (which is normally included among adaptations from Calderón for the very good reason that his own Preface to the third edition acknowledges the 'celebrated Spanish author' as his source) was a rendering of *Los Empeños de Seis Horas* (c. 1641) by Antonio Coello (1611–52). (Both *Elvira* and the *Adventures* are printed in W. C. Hazlitt, *Old English Plays*, 1876, vol. xv.) Dryden (in *The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy*, Watson, I, 244) and Howard (Preface to *Four New Plays*) both make deprecatory remarks on the loose construction of Spanish plays.

p. 68, l. 990. *Rollo . . . Herodian*] The play, first published 1639 under the title *The Bloody Brother. A Tragedy*, received the title to which Dryden refers (*The Tragoedy of Rollo, Duke of Normandy*) in the second edition, 1640. The play's modern editor, J. D. Jump, gives evidence for thinking that it was the joint work of Fletcher, Massinger, Jonson, and Chapman. *Herodian* (bks. III and IV) is the main, though not the only source; the authors transfer the action from Rome to Normandy, change all the names of persons and places, and add comic scenes. The play was extremely popular; an attempt was made to perform it even under the Commonwealth; and Charles Hart (see below, p. 167) scored one of his triumphs in the part of Rollo.

p. 68, l. 994. *you see . . . parts*] Thomas Rymer (in *Tragedies of the Last*

*Age*, 1678) attributes the success of *Rollo* in large measure to the comic scenes. Dryden has in mind the scenes in which the kitchen staff appear—II, ii, in which they agree to poison Rollo's brother, and III, ii, in which they go to execution—together with IV, ii, in which a group of rogues meet in an astrologer's house. The kitchen scenes were acted separately as comic entertainment at inns or fairs, and published (as *The Three Merry Boyes*, 1672) independently of the play. (See Jump, op. cit., 1948, p. xxxii.)

p. 68, l. 999. *Oleo*] A corruption of *olla podrida*, the name of a Spanish stew made of several kinds of meat and vegetables: hence 'oleo' means a mixture. The term occurs in the comic kitchen scene in *Rollo* (II, ii, 146) referred to above. Dryden also uses the Spanish term in his *Discourse concerning . . . Satire*: 'That *olla*, or hotchpotch, which is properly a satire' (Watson, II, 146). Cf. Congreve, *The Way of the World* (1700), III, ii.

p. 68, l. 1002. *Golia's*] *Golias* was a comic figure of medieval literature. Satirical poems on 'bishop *Golias*' have been doubtfully attributed to Walter Map (or Mapes) (fl. 1200), archdeacon of Oxford under Henry II.

p. 68, l. 1002. *In Sejanus . . . Fulvia*] *Sejanus*, II, i; *Catiline*, III, iii, II, i.

p. 68, l. 1011. *ingenious person*] George Williamson suggests Thomas Sprat who remarks, in *Observations on M. de Sorbier's Voyage into England*, 1665: 'The French, for the most part, take only One or Two Great Men, and chiefly insist on some one Remarkable Accident of the Story; to this end they admit no more Persons than will [barely] serve to adorn that.' (See George Williamson, 'The Occasion of *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*', *Modern Philology*, XLIV (1946-7), 4.)

p. 69, l. 1035. *protatick persons*] Apparently a borrowing from Corneille who, in the *examen* for *Rodogune*, speaks of a 'personnage protatique' (*Œuvres*, IV, 423 and n.) i.e. an introductory character. He also uses the term in his *Discours du Poème Dramatique*: 'Pour ouvrir son sujet [Térence] a introduit une nouvelle sorte de personnages qu' on a appelés protatiques, parce qu' ils ne paroissent que dans la protase, où se doit faire la proposition et l'ouverture du sujet' (*Œuvres*, I, 46).

p. 69, l. 1039 *interested*] i.e. concerned. The precise meaning Dryden attaches to this word was a very recent development of the verb; *O.E.D.* gives 1664 as the earliest example.

p. 70, l. 1049. *being once . . . beautiful*] Cf. Corneille, *Discours des Trois Unités*: 'J'ajoute un conseil, de s'embarrasser le moins qu'il lui est possible de choses arrivées avant l'action qui se représente. Ces narrations importunent d'ordinaire, parce qu'elles ne sont pas attendues, et qu'elles gênent l'esprit de l'auditeur, qui est obligé de charger sa mémoire de ce qui s'est fait dix ou douze ans auparavant, pour comprendre ce qu'il voit représenter; mais celles qui se font des choses qui arrivent et se passent derrière le théâtre, depuis l'action commencée, font toujours un meilleur effet, parce qu'elles sont attendues avec quelque curiosité, et font partie de cette action qui se représente' (*Œuvres*, I, 104-5).

p. 70, l. 1061. *Theaters . . . prizes*] 'Prize' here means a contest (not a reward) and thus 'to fight prizes' is to engage in a public fighting-match. (O.E.D.'s earliest example of this exact usage is dated 1702.) Pepys (*Diary*, 1 June 1663) refers to 'the New Theatre which, since the King's Players are gone to the Royal one, is this day begun to be employed by the fencers to play prizes at'.

p. 70, l. 1061. *For . . . behind it*] Cf. Sidney, *Apology*: ' . . . in the meantime two armies flie in, represented with four swords and bucklers, and then what hard heart will not receive it for a pitched field?' (ed. Needham, p. 52). Cf. also Addison, *Spectator*, 42.

p. 71, l. 1094. *What . . . to it*] Watson observes that Descartes' *Principia Philosophiae* (1644), first published in English 1664, states the principle: 'The first [law of nature], that each individual thing continues as it is, and never changes except by encountering other things. . . . Once it begins to move, we have no reason to think it will ever cease to move with the same force, so long as it encounters nothing to retard or stop it' (II, 37).

p. 71, l. 1105. *Corneille . . . narration*] In *Discours des Trois Unités*: 'Le poëte n'est pas tenu d'exposer à la vue toutes les actions particulières qui amènent à la principale: il doit choisir celles qui lui sont les plus avantageuses à faire voir, soit par la beauté du spectacle, soit par l'éclat et la véhémence des passions qu'elles produisent, soit par quelque autre agrément qui leur soit attaché, et cacher les autres derrière la scène, pour les faire connoître au spectateur, ou par une narration, ou par quelque autre adresse de l'art' (*Œuvres*, I, 100).

p. 72, l. 1120. *Segnius . . . anguem*] *Ars Poetica*, ll. 180-7 (line omitted after *trucidet*; ' . . . avem Procne vertatur . . .'): 'The mind is stirred less

vividly by what enters through the ears than by what is brought before the eyes it can rely on, and by what the spectator can see for himself. Yet do not bring on the stage what should be performed behind the scenes, and keep much from our eyes which an actor's ready tongue will narrate before us. Medea must not butcher her boys in front of the audience, [nor evil Atreus cook human flesh on the stage,] nor Procne be turned into a bird, Cadmus into a snake.'

p. 72, l. 1138. *We . . . Story*] *Magnetic Lady*, licensed 1632, printed 1640. In III, ii, the soldier, Capt. Ironside, and Mr. Compass, the scholar, appear after a rowdy dinner-party (at which we are told 'all their weapons are out') and relate some details of the 'quarrels and disorders'.

p. 73, l. 1140. *undecent*] i.e. unbecoming.

p. 73, l. 1142. *Terence . . . entertainment*] *Eunuchus*, IV, iii. Earlier (p. 56) Eugenius credits the maidservant Dorias with this activity; it is Pythias who reports a rape off-stage.

p. 73, l. 1145. *The relations . . . believ'd*] *Sejanus*, first produced 1603. In V, x, following the order for the ceremonial sacrifice of an ox, the breaking of 'images and statues' of Sejanus, his chariot-wheels, and the legs of his chariot-horses, Terentius relates in grim detail how the mob tore the corpse of Sejanus to pieces; Nuntius tells how Sejanus's young daughter was raped, and then strangled along with 'her harmless brother'.

p. 73, l. 1149. *In . . . the Play*] *A King and No King* (first acted 1611) was the joint work of Beaumont and Fletcher. Dryden refers to the final act in which Gobrias reveals that he is the father of Arbaces, the king of Illyria; Arbaces is therefore 'no King' and is free to marry Panthea the true heir to the throne. Dryden refers again to this play in *Heads of an Answer to Rymer* and *The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy*, and makes clear his admiration for Fletcher—'a limb of Shakespeare'—in particular (Watson, I, 215, 253, 260).

p. 73, l. 1161. *simple . . . will*] A phrase—'le simple changement de volonté'—to be found in Corneille's *Premier* and *Troisième Discours* (*Œuvres*, I, 28, 105).

p. 73, l. 1169. *the conversion . . . Play*] Again the joint work of Beaumont and Fletcher, *The Scornful Lady* was written 1609-10 and published

1616. The avarice of Morecraft, the usurer, is insisted on from the first lines of the play; he is utterly confident in his schemes to achieve wealth and scornful of the possibility of failure; and yet, in v, i, he suddenly changes course and renounces his extortionate practices. His 'conversion' (as it is described by the prodigal, Young Loveless) astonishes the other characters: 'Under a miracle this is the strangest I ever heard of', as the Elder Loveless remarks.

p. 74, l. 1174. *dup'd*] Watson notes this as the first recorded use of this French borrowing.

p. 74, l. 1187. *necessary*] i.e. inevitable.

p. 74, l. 1187. *so that . . . to say*] Corneille, *Discours des Trois Unités*: 'Il faut, s'il se peut, y rendre raison de l'entrée et de la sortie de chaque acteur; surtout pour la sortie je tiens cette règle indispensable, et il n'y a rien de si mauvaise grâce qu'un acteur qui se retire du théâtre seulement parce qu'il n'a plus de vers à dire' (*Œuvres*, I, 108).

p. 74, l. 1193. *I . . . by us*] Dryden had already expressed his preference for rhyme over blank verse in the Dedication to *The Rival Ladies* (this play itself being partly in rhyme). It is there he makes his famous statement that Waller first taught 'the excellence and dignity' of rhymed verse in the lyric, Denham 'followed in the epic' (*Cooper's Hill*), 'but, if we owe the invention of it to Mr. Waller, we are acknowledging for the noblest use of it to Sir William Davenant, who at once brought it upon the stage, and made it perfect, in the *Siege of Rhodes*' (Watson, I, 7).

p. 75, l. 1202. *great . . . against it*] Howard—whose ability as both poet and critic Dryden had praised in the prefatory letter to *Annus Mirabilis*—spoke against rhyme as 'unnatural' on the stage in his Preface to *Four New Plays*. Cf. Crites' speech, pp. 97-101 below.

p. 75, l. 1206. *Sed . . . conquirimus*] Velleius Paterculus, *Historia Romana*, I, 17 ('Et ut primo consequendos quos . . . senescit, et quod adsequi non potest, sequi desinit [Dryden here omits seven words] . . .'): 'But as in the beginning we burn with the ambition to overtake those whom we regard as leaders, so when we have despaired of being able either to surpass or even to equal them, our zeal wanes with our hope; it ceases to follow what it cannot overtake . . . and leaving aside that in which we cannot be pre-eminent, we seek for some new object of our effort.'

p. 76, l. 1236. *Corneille . . . own Country*] Corneille's *Le Menteur* (1643),

translated and produced in London (1661?) as *The Mistaken Beauty: or the Liar*; Charles Hart—whose death in 1683 accounts for the removal of his name from the 1684 edition of the *Essay*—took the part of Dorant. Hart was a member of the Red Bull company in 1660; in 1661, together with Howard, he became a lessee of the Theatre Royal in Bridges Street, and later manager of the Theatre Royal in Vere Street. An outstanding actor, he excelled particularly as Mosca in *Volpone* and as Wildblood in Dryden's *An Evening's Love*.

p. 76, l. 1243. *he . . . reconcile them*] In *Discours du poème dramatique*: 'Ainsi, dans les comédies . . . j'ai presque toujours établi deux amants en bonne intelligence; je les ai brouillés ensemble par quelque fourbe, et les ai réunis par l'éclaircissement de cette même fourbe qui les séparait' (*Œuvres*, I, 30).

p. 76, l. 1248. *younger Corneille*] Thomas Corneille (1625-1709), younger brother of Pierre; his most successful play was *Timocrate* (1656).

p. 76, l. 1248. *Quinault*] Philippe Quinault (1635-88). He and Thomas Corneille were the most notable dramatists between the zenith of Pierre Corneille and the coming of Racine. His play *Les Rivaux* (1653) most probably provided Dryden with ideas for the plot and title of his *Rival Ladies*. Quinault's *L'Amant indiscret* (1654) supplied him with some suggestions for his adaptation of Molière's *L'Étourdi* in *Sir Martin Mar-All*.

p. 76, l. 1252. *Richlieu*] died 1642. His death does not appear to have influenced French drama in the way Dryden asserts.

p. 76, l. 1255. *like . . . Novells*] e.g. Beaumont's *Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1613); Ford's (?) *The Spanish Gipsy* (1623); Fletcher's *Custom of the Country* (1647); Dryden's own *Wild Gallant* (1663) and *Rival Ladies* (1664). (Dryden returns to this point regarding Beaumont and Fletcher in the Preface to *An Evening's Love*, Watson, I, 154.)

p. 76, l. 1257. *Adventures*] Sir Samuel Tuke's *Adventures of Five Hours* (see above, p. 162.) Diego is the servant, 'a great coward, and a pleasant droll' (as Tuke describes him). Pepys (*Diary*, 1 June 1663) found the play 'excellent'.

p. 77, l. 1279. *The . . . each other*] Watson cites France Burgersdijck, *Institutionum logicarum libri duo* (1626), I, xxii, 'De oppositione rerum'

Theorem v: 'Opposita juxta se posita, magis elucescunt' ('Contraries, when placed together, shine the more'). This book of logic would be well known during Dryden's Cambridge days.

p. 77, l. 1282. *bait . . . journey*] i.e. to stop at an inn for refreshment.

p. 78, l. 1302. *as . . . contain'd*] A reference to Ptolemaic astronomy (which Dryden had surely rejected in favour of the Copernican system) in which the sphere beyond the fixed stars gives the eight lower spheres their motion.

p. 78, l. 1313. *Eugenius*] should read 'Crites'. See p. 48, above.

p. 78, l. 1319. *Co-ordination*] This usage does not signify 'harmonious combination' (the nineteenth-century scientific usage), but an absence of that proper subordination which is essential to an ordered hierarchy. (It is worth noting that neither Malone nor Scott considered the word required explanation: their contemporary, Coleridge, still used it in the seventeenth-century sense.)

p. 79, l. 1327. *Neither . . . are gone*] Cf. Dryden's Preface to *All for Love* (1678): 'But as the civillest man in the company is commonly the dullest, so these authors [the French], while they are afraid to make you laugh or cry, out of pure good manners make you sleep' (Watson, I, 224).

p. 79, l. 1337. *Cinna . . . Polieucte*] Three fairly early plays by Corneille: *Cinna*, 1640; *La Mort de Pompée*, 1644; *Polyeucte*, 1641?

p. 79, l. 1341. *Hour- . . . Parsons*] An allusion to the practice of fixing an hour-glass on the pulpit. (O.E.D. gives references to the practice ranging from 1591 to 1852.)

p. 81, l. 1383. *labyrinth of design*] Cf. Dryden's Preface to *Oedipus* (1679): ' . . . an under-plot of second persons, which must be depending on the first, and their by-walks must be like those in a labyrinth, which all of 'em lead into the great parterre' (Watson, I, 234).

p. 81, l. 1387. *Maid's . . . Fox*] *The Maid's Tragedy* (1619) by Beaumont and Fletcher; the other three plays by Jonson—*The Alchemist*, 1610; *The Silent Woman*, 1609; *Volpone: or the Fox*, 1607.

p. 81, l. 1388. *the unity . . . former*] In fact Volpone's avarice and sensual lust are present throughout the play; they are suggested in his own boast

—'The Turk is not more sensual in his pleasures/Than will Volpone' (1, 1)—and linked in Mosca's comment on Corvino's wife, Celia—'Bright as your gold, and lovely as your gold' (1, 1). Thus though Acts I-IV centre mainly on the plot to seduce Celia, and Act V on the attempt to outwit the suitors or to punish the wrongdoers, Dryden's general criticism does not hold good.

p. 82, l. 1420. *Andromede*] A spectacle-play (1650); the subject matter is taken from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and is indeed far 'removed from all appearance' of credibility. Much of its success was due to the production and scenic effects of the Italian, Giacomo Torelli.

p. 82, l. 1426. *Ballette*] Watson observes that this French borrowing makes its first appearance in English here.

p. 82, l. 1431. *though . . . to Rome*] Dryden returns to this point in the *Defence*. See below, p. 142. (Catiline's army was about 180 miles from Rome.)

p. 82, l. 1437. *which . . . same fault*] Dryden is referring to the Prologue to *Every Man in His Humour* (1616), ll. 8-16. Jonson announces that he will not imitate 'ill customes of the age' such as:

To make a child, now swaddled, to proceede  
Man, and then shoote up, in one beard, and weede,  
Past threescore yeeres: or, with three rustie swords,  
And help of some few foot-and-half-foote words,  
Fight over Yorke and Lancaster's long jarres:  
And in the tying-house bring wounds, to scarres.  
He rather prayes, you will be pleas'd to see  
One such, today, as other playes should be.  
Where neither chorus wafts you ore the seas;  
Nor creaking throne comes downe, the boyes to please.  
(Herford and Simpson, III, 303.)

p. 82, l. 1441. *if . . . of it*] Howard censures the French on similar grounds. He admits, with Horace, that actions which arouse disgust should be related rather than presented, but asserts that the French go further and 'without the necessity, sometime commit the error' (Preface to *Four New Plays*).

p. 83, l. 1456. *Il est . . . from it*] Dryden's is an accurate translation of the passage he cites (*Œuvres*, I, 122).

p. 84, l. 1490. *newest Plays*] Thomas Corneille's *L'Amour à la Mode* (1651), later produced in English as *The Amorous Gallant, or Love in Fashion* (1675).

p. 85, l. 1517. *since . . . vogue*] The last of Corneille's great plays was *Nicomède* (1650/1); the tragedy *Pertharite* (1651?) was a failure; and for the next seven years he wrote no more. As his popularity declined so Quinault's (many of whose best plays appeared in the 1650's) rose.

p. 85, l. 1525. *We . . . looms*] But often with French thread: the list of Restoration plays, by both distinguished and undistinguished playwrights, which were based on French sources is endless. See A. Nicoll, *A History of Restoration Drama* (Cambridge, 1952), pp. 95-8, 186-91.

p. 85, l. 1531. *Presidents*] i.e. precedents.

p. 85, l. 1532. *not . . . now use*] This is inaccurate. Though rough hexameters were used in plays such as Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister* (c. 1553), and Gammer Gurton's *Needle* (c. 1566), not all pre-Shakespearean comedies were in this metre. Pentameters are to be found in Peele's *Old Wives Tale* (c. 1590) and Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (c. 1589-90).

p. 86, l. 1539. *Sad Shepherd*] An unfinished pastoral drama, Jonson's last play (c. 1635).

p. 86, l. 1542. *Faithful Shepherdess*] Written 1608-9, published c. 1609.

p. 86, l. 1556. *Merry . . . Lady*] Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor* (1602) is 'almost exactly formed', i.e. it very nearly observes the unities of time and place: the action, concentrated in or around Windsor, occupies two days. Beaumont and Fletcher's *Scornful Lady* (1616) takes place within two days and is concentrated in London.

p. 87, l. 1564. *Examen*] i.e. a critical analysis and assessment. Dryden doubtless took the word from Corneille's 'examens' of his own plays.

p. 87, l. 1574. *envy*] i.e. ill-will. Cf. p. 106 l. 2168. Dryden's forecast was perhaps fulfilled. The critical accounts which follow may have been those which unjustly earned him the reputation among some contemporaries of being 'a detractor from [his] predecessors' (Dedication to *The Assination* (1673), Watson, I, 187-8).

p. 87, l. 1578. *To . . . above him*] Cf. Johnson, *Life of Dryden*: 'The

account of Shakespeare may stand as a perpetual model of encomiastick criticism; exact without minuteness, and lofty without exaggeration'; Shakespeare's editors and admirers have only 'diffused and paraphrased this epitome of excellence, . . . having changed Dryden's gold for baser metal, of lower value though of greater bulk'.

p. 87, l. 1583. *Those . . . learning*] Dryden almost certainly has Jonson in mind here. Cf. Preface to *All for Love*: '[Shakespeare] . . . untaught by any and, as Ben Jonson tells us, without learning' (Watson, I, 231). Jonson's, like Dryden's, view of Shakespeare is finely balanced between praise for his natural genius and censure for his meagre learning ('small Latin, and less Greek') and disregard for decorum (cf. p. 82 and n., above).

p. 87, l. 1588. *He is . . . Poets*] Cf. Dryden's similar remarks in the *Defence of the Epilogue* (Watson, I, 178).

p. 88, l. 1594. *Quantum . . . cupressi*] Virgil, *Ecolgues*, I, 25; 'as cypresses usually do among the pliant wayfaring trees'.

p. 88, l. 1595. *Mr. . . . Eaton*] John Hales (1584-1656), Fellow of Eton from 1613; the *Golden Remains of the Ever Memorable Mr. John Hales* appeared in 1659. (One of Aubrey's *Brief Lives* is devoted to him.)

p. 88, l. 1612. *the verses . . . him*] Jonson's Epigram 55:

How doe I love thee, Beaumont, and thy *Muse*,  
That unto me dost such religion use!  
How doe I feare my selfe, that am not worth  
The least indulgent thought thy pen drops forth!

When even there, where most thou praysest mee,  
For writing better, I must envie thee.

(Herford and Simpson, VIII, 44.)

p. 88, l. 1614. *Philaster*] *Philaster, or Love lies a-bleeding*, a romantic drama first produced (with enormous success) between 1608-10; published 1620. According to Charles Lamb (*Specimens of English Dramatic Poets*) the popularity of Bellario, the female page and heroine-in-disguise, was a main cause of its success. 'For many years after the date of *Philaster*'s first exhibition on the stage, scarce a play can be found without one of those women pages in it, following in the train of some pre-engaged lover' (*Works*, ed. E. V. Lucas, IV (1904), 295.) For less favourable comment on the play, by Dryden, see *Defence of the Epilogue* (Watson, I, 172.)

p. 88, l. 1614. *before . . . unsuccessfully*] It is now thought that Beaumont was alone responsible for the (unsuccessful) *Knight of the Burning Pestle* (acted 1607-10); it is not known how much of Fletcher's hand is in *The Woman Hater* (acted c. 1606) or of Beaumont's in *Cupid's Revenge* (acted 1607-12). However, Dryden may have believed the three plays to be joint works.

p. 88, l. 1615. *the like . . . Humour*] Dryden here perpetuates the traditional view of this play (first acted September 1598) as Jonson's earliest success. Dr. P. Simpson (*Every Man in His Humour*, Oxford, 1919, p. ix) quotes Aubrey's remark that the play was Jonson's 'first good one'. Before its appearance Jonson probably finished Nashe's *Isle of Dogs* (acted 1597) and suffered imprisonment for it.

p. 88, l. 1623. *they . . . Love*] Dryden compares Fletcher with Shakespeare on the representation of the 'passions', particularly love, in *The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy* (Watson, I, 260).

p. 89, l. 1628. *Their . . . Johnson's*] Statistical analysis bears out Dryden's claim: see A. C. Sprague, *Beaumont and Fletcher on the Restoration Stage* (Harvard, 1926); J. H. Wilson, *The Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Restoration Drama* (Ohio State University, 1928). The two dramatists held their popularity till about 1682 when it began to decline; by 1710 Shakespeare had overtaken them.

p. 89, l. 1633. *Shakespeare's . . . obsolete*] In his Preface to *Troilus and Cressida* (1679) Dryden maintains that, because of the refinement of language in his own time, 'many of [Shakespeare's] words, and more of his phrases, are scarce intelligible' (Watson, I, 239).

p. 89, l. 1637. *his . . . dotages*] Dryden probably had in mind *The Staple of News* (1626), *The New Inn* (1629), and *The Magnetick Lady* (1632). He may also have thought that *A Tale of a Tub* was a late play because of its late publication (1633).

p. 89, l. 1639. *judicious*] This term—in its sense of exercising fine judgement, discretion, and precise intellectual control—gives the character to Dryden's estimate of Jonson. Cf. Preface to *An Evening's Love*: 'his talent . . . needed not the acumen of wit, but that of judgment' (Watson, I, 148); *Defence of the Epilogue*: 'Jonson, the most judicious of Poets . . . always writ properly' (Watson, I, 178). See also *Defence*, p. 145 l. 669, below.

p. 89, l. 1651. *Mechanick*] i.e. vulgar, base.

p. 90, l. 1665. *perhaps . . . of ours*] This charge reappears in Dryden's list of Jonson's faults, in the *Defence of the Epilogue*: ' . . . to introduce Latin by the loss of the English idiom; as in the translation of Tully's speeches he usually does' (Watson, I, 175).

p. 90, l. 1676. *Discoveries*] *Timber: or Discoveries* (1640). This work, valuable as it is, does not deserve the extent of Dryden's praise. It has the character of a commonplace book and Jonson does not argue a fully worked-out dramatic theory comparable with Corneille's.

p. 90, l. 1679. *Silent Woman*] *Epicoene, or The Silent Woman*, first acted 1609.

p. 90, l. 1683. 'Tis . . . *Stage*] The action occupies approximately twelve hours: at the opening Clerimont is dressing; it is still 'afore noon' in III, v; we learn in IV, iv, that 'This is but a day, and 'tis well worn too now'; and in IV, v, Truewit remarks, 'if I do not yet afore night, as neere as 'tis . . .'

p. 91, l. 1687. *Five Hours*] *Tuke's Adventures of Five Hours*. Cf. p. 162 above.

p. 91, l. 1688. *The . . . in one*] Quite untrue: the scene of the action is London, but it involves four houses and far beyond Act I. Act I takes place in Clerimont's house; most of the main action occurs in Morose's house (II, i; II, iii; III, ii; IV, i-ii; V, i), or in a lane nearby (II, iv); II, ii, passes in Sir John Daw's house, and III, i, in Capt. Otter's.

p. 91, l. 1692. *They . . . Comedy*] Dryden rightly stresses the plot's coherence but, as the preceding note indicates, breaks between the scenes are frequent.

p. 91, l. 1709. *Beside . . . represented*] There was a tradition that Morose was modelled on a particular individual (see Herford and Simpson, II, 70). The 'Memorandums of the Immortal Ben' include the remark: 'At Christmas my L<sup>d</sup> B—— took me with him into ye Country . . . a new character offered ite. to me here, upon w<sup>ch</sup> I wrote my *Silent Woman*' (Herford and Simpson, I, 188).

p. 92, l. 1714. *To prove . . . Lying*] Cf. Dryden's *Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy*: ' . . . so in a comical character of humour (which is an inclination

to this or that particular folly), Falstaff is a liar, and a coward, a glutton, and a buffoon, because all these qualities may agree in the same man' (Watson, I, 250).

p. 92, l. 1718. *humour . . . others*] This account of 'humour' recalls Jonson's Induction to *Every Man out of His Humour*, ll. 98-109:

So in every humane body  
The choller, melancholy, flegme, and bloud,  
By reason that they flow continually  
In some one part, and are not continent,  
Receive the name of Humours. Now thus farre  
It may, by *Metaphore*, apply it selfe  
Unto the generall disposition:  
As when some one peculiar quality  
Doth so possesse a man, that it doth draw  
All his effects, his spirits, and his powers,  
In their confluents, all to runne one way,  
This may be truly said to be a Humour.  
(Herford and Simpson, III, 431-2)

p. 92, l. 1729. *the very . . . alone*] Dryden uses this idea to heighten the comic element in his own *Mac Flecknoe* where—echoing *I Henry IV* II, iv, 442—Flecknoe addresses Shadwell:

'A Tun of Man in thy Large bulk is writ,  
But sure thou'rt but a Kilderkin of wit.'  
(ll. 195-6)

p. 92, l. 1733. *Τὸ γελοῖον*] Aristotle, *Poetics*, v: 'the ludicrous'.

p. 92, l. 1737. *Thus . . . Spectators*] Watson points out an echo of Jonson's *Discoveries* here: '[The multitude] love nothing, that is right, and proper. The farther it runs from reason, or possibility with them, the better it is. What could have made them laugh, like to see *Socrates* presented, that Example of all good life, honesty, and vertue, to have him hoisted up with a Pullie, and there play the Philosopher, in a basquet?' (Herford and Simpson, VIII, 644). Jonson's allusion is to the *Clouds* of Aristophanes, ll. 218ff.

p. 92, l. 1744. *express . . . Mankind*] *ἦθος*, 'character' or 'disposition'; *πάθος*, 'emotion' or 'transient passion'.

p. 93, l. 1750. *Ex . . . dicas*] Terence, *Eunuchus*, l. 460: 'one the exact image of the other.'

p. 93, l. 1752. *As . . . Comedy*] Dryden is not quite accurate here. *Humeur* meant 'disposition of the mind' or 'temperament'; it certainly referred to some 'passion or affection' which distinguished an individual from the group in which he was for the time being, but perhaps not from 'the rest of men' in general.

p. 94, l. 1778. *True-Wit*] A character who clearly fascinated Dryden: 'the best character of a Gentlemen which Ben Jonson ever made' (Preface to *An Evening's Love*, Watson, I, 151); among Jonson's gentlemen 'Truewit . . . was his masterpiece' (*Defence of the Epilogue*, Watson, I, 180).

p. 94, l. 1780. *For . . . thoughts*] The 'untying' of the plot turns on the revelation by Sir Dauphine Eugenie, Morose's nephew, that his uncle's bride is a boy. Dryden's praise for the secrecy involved in the dénouement is somewhat misplaced: the dénouement would probably be more effective if the audience were let into the secret of the plot at an earlier stage.

p. 94, l. 1797. *Creditur . . . minus*] *Epistles*, II, i, 168-70: 'It is thought that comedy, drawing its themes from daily life, calls for less labour; but it calls proportionately for more as the indulgence allowed is less.'

p. 94, l. 1803. *Corneille . . . depend*] Corneille's *Discours des Trois Unités*: 'Je ne puis oublier que c'est un grand ornement pour un poëme que le choix d'un jour illustre et attendu depuis quelque temps. Il ne s'en présente pas toujours des occasions; et dans tout ce que j'ai fait jusqu'ici, vous ne trouverez de cette nature que quatre: celui d'*Horace* où deux peuples devoient décider de leur empire par une bataille; celui de *Rodogune*, d'*Andromède*, et de *Don Sanche* . . . dans le reste de mes ouvrages, je n'ai pu choisir des jours remarquables que par ce que le hasard y fait arriver, et non pas par l'emploi où l'ordre public les aye destinés de longues main' (*Œuvres*, I, 116-17). L. E. Padgett in 'Dryden's Edition of Corneille', *Modern Language Notes*, LXXI (1956), 173-4, shows that Dryden's reference to Corneille's never achieving his aim 'above thrice in all his Plays' proves that he used the 1660 edn. of Corneille's *Théâtre*, not the revised edns. of 1663 or 1664.

p. 95, l. 1810. *That . . . months*] Dauphine, fearing Truewit has wrecked

his plans to hoodwink his uncle, Morose, exclaims: 'That which I have plotted for, and beene maturing now these foure moneths, you have blasted in a minute: now I am lost . . .' (II, iv, 37-39).

p. 95, l. 1820. *Batholomew-Fair*] First performed 31 October 1614; published 1631.

p. 96, l. 1844. *Chess-player*] Spelt 'chest-player' in 2nd edn.; this spelling was becoming obsolete and Dryden adopts the more fashionable form in 1693.

p. 96, l. 1849. *Molière . . . them*] Dryden possibly has in mind Molière's first five-act play in prose, *Dom Juan* (1665), though the French dramatist had used prose in the one-act *Les Precieuses ridicules* (1659) and *L'impromptu de Versailles* (1663).

p. 96, l. 1855. *And . . . on it*] Dryden is writing as a partisan Royalist. The theatres had been closed under the Commonwealth, but the Puritans were not to be dismissed as 'Enemies of all good Learning'.

p. 96, l. 1867. *seven years*] Since Dryden is dating the dramatic revival from the Restoration, this number (or perhaps the whole passage) must have been revised immediately prior to publication.

p. 97, l. 1873. *Ubi . . . maculis*] Horace, *Ars Poetica*, ll. 351-2: 'When the beauties in a poem are numerous, I shall not take offence at a few faults.'

p. 97, l. 1879. *Vivorum . . . difficilis*] Velleius Paterculus, *Historia Romana*, II, 36.

p. 98, l. 1903. *late Plague*] Even in the 1st edn. version, 'great Plague', the reference is anachronistic, because the conversation in the *Essay* is supposed to take place on 3 June 1665 and Defoe, in the *Journal of the Plague Year*, says the plague did not reach its peak until August and September 1665. It had scarcely begun in June.

p. 98, l. 1920. *But . . . Laberi*] Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, II, 7: 'despite my favouring you, Laberius, you have been overcome.' The 'other poet' was Publilius Syrus; Caesar judged him the winner as a result of Laberius's liberties of speech. (Laberius's indignant prologue is translated by Goldsmith.)

p. 98, l. 1926. *First then*] From this point to the end of Crites' speech the argument adheres very closely to Howard's in his Preface to *Four New*

*Plays* and provides the best evidence for identifying Crites with Howard. In his Preface, concerning the merits of rhyme and blank verse, he writes:

'in the general they are both proper—that is, one for a play, the other for a poem or copy of verses, a blank verse being as much too low for one as rhyme is unnatural for the other.

A poem being a premeditated form of thoughts upon designed occasions ought not to be unfurnished of any harmony in words or sound. The other is presented as the present effect of accidents not thought of. So that 'tis impossible it should be equally proper to both these—unless it were possible that all persons were born so much more than poets that verses were not to be composed by them, but already made in them. Some may object that this argument is trivial because, whatever is shown, 'tis known still to be but a play. But such may as well excuse an ill scene that is not naturally painted because they know 'tis only a scene and not really a city or country.

But there is yet another thing which makes verse upon the stage appear more unnatural—that is, when a piece of a verse is made up by one that knew not what the other meant to say, and the former verse answered as perfectly in sound as the last is supplied in measure, so that the smartness of a reply which has its beauty by coming from sudden thoughts seems lost by that which rather looks like a design of two than the answer of one.

It may be said that rhyme is such a confinement to a quick and luxuriant fancy that it gives a stop to its speed till slow judgment comes in to assist it. But . . . he that wants judgment in the liberty of his fancy may as well show the defect of it in its confinement, and, to say truth, he that has judgment will avoid the errors and he that wants it will commit them both.

It may be objected 'tis improbable that anyone should speak *ex tempore* as well as Beaumont and Fletcher make them—though in blank verse. I do not only acknowledge that, but that 'tis also improbable any will write so well that way. But if that may be allowed improbable, I believe it may be concluded impossible that any should speak as good verses in rhyme as the best poets have writ, and therefore that which seems nearest to what it intends is ever to be preferred. Nor are great thoughts more adorned by verse than verse unbeautified by mean ones: so that verse seems not only unfit in the best use of it, but much more in the worse—when a servant is called or a door bid to be shut in rhyme.

Verses (I mean good ones) do in their height of fancy declare the labour that brought them forth like majesty that goes with care: and Nature that made the poet capable seems to retire and leave its offers to be made perfect by pains and judgment.'

(D. D. Arundell, *Dryden and Howard, 1664-68*, Cambridge, 1929, pp. 8-10).

p. 99, l. 1938. *Aristotle . . . Iambique*] *Poetics*, iv: 'The iambic is, of all measures, the most colloquial; we see it in the fact that conversational speech runs into iambic form more frequently than into any other kind of verse.'

p. 99, l. 1943. *paper of Verses*] Verses (perhaps normally complimentary) circulated in manuscript. Cf. the prefatory letter to *Annus Mirabilis*: 'a paper of verses which I wrote last year to her Highness the Duchess [of York]' (Watson, I, 102).

p. 99, l. 1956. *nicking*] i.e. corresponding exactly with.

p. 99, l. 1958. *Arcades . . . parati*] Virgil, *Eclogues*, vii, 4-5 ('Arcades ambo . . .'): 'all Arcadians equally ready both to sing and to make reply.'

p. 99, l. 1960. *quicquid . . . dicere*] The same quotation appears in Sidney's *Apology* (ed. Needham, p. 51) and is attributed to Ovid; Ovid's line (*Tristia*, iv, x, 26) actually runs: 'Et quod tentabam dicere versus erat' ('And whatever I tried to express, was poetry').

p. 100, l. 1966. *Ars . . . artem*] Original authorship unknown.

p. 100, l. 1977. *But . . . to it*] Crites is here addressing Dryden himself since it was he, in the Preface to *The Rival Ladies*, who had claimed that rhyme was superior to blank verse in that it 'bounds and circumscribes the fancy. . . . The great easiness of blank verse renders the poet too luxuriant' (Watson, I, 8). Howard had made precisely the same point in his Preface, in reply to Dryden.

p. 101, l. 1999. *Nescivit . . . relinquere*] In this and the quotation following, Dryden confuses two authors. Marcus Seneca, the rhetorician, says of Ovid, 'nescit quod bene . . .' (*Controversiae*, ix, 5), but quotes from *Metamorphoses*, xiii, 503-5. The line 'Omnia pontus erat . . .' (*Metamorphoses*, I, 292) is quoted with approval by Lucius Seneca, the philosopher, in his *Quaestiones Naturales*, iii, 27. Dryden quotes the first of these lines, and provides a translation, in his Preface to *Ovid's Epistles*

(1680): 'Seneca's censure will stand good against [Ovid]: nescivit quod bene cessit relinquere: he never knew how to give over when he had done well' (Watson, I, 265).

p. 101, l. 2012. *already publick*] An explicit confession that Dryden has been adhering to Howard's previously published views.

p. 101, l. 2017. *that those . . . kind*] Dryden's rhymed plays before the *Essay* were (with Howard) *The Indian-Queen* (first performed 1664 and published in Howard's *Four New Plays*, 1665), and *The Indian Emperour* (acted 1665, published 1667).

p. 101, l. 2021. *both . . . person*] Nichol Smith and Watson feel there is a textual corruption here. It is not clear from the text to what 'both' refers: it might refer to 'respect and deference' or, as Nichol Smith suggests, the words 'to you and' may have been omitted after 'both'. 'That person' might be Howard (from whom Crites had borrowed his arguments); Watson proposes Aristotle as a possibility.

p. 102, l. 2042. *I . . . make*] Source unknown. Watson suggests Dryden may have concocted the line for the occasion.

p. 103, l. 2072. *prevail himself of*] Derives from the French, *se prévaloir de*—to give oneself the advantage of. (O.E.D.'s earliest example of this usage is in 1617.) Note that in the 2nd edn. Dryden substitutes 'has made use of' for 'has prevailed himself of' at p. 94, l. 1800, above.

p. 103, l. 2077. *perpetuo . . . fluere*] Cicero, *Orator*, VI, 21 ('uno tenore . . . fluit').

p. 104, l. 2095. *Preface . . . Ladies*] The advantages of rhyme claimed there are 'the help it brings to memory', the particular 'grace' it adds to 'the quickness of repartees', and the welcome discipline it imposes on the 'wild and lawless' poetic imagination (Watson, I, 8–9).

p. 104, l. 2110. *Dan[iel] . . . Rhyme*] Daniel's *Defence* was published in 1603 in reply to Campion's *Art of English Poesie*. Daniel remarks: 'Georgienez De Turcarum moribus, hath an example of the Turkish Rymes just of the measure of our verse of eleven sillables, in feminine Ryme: never begotten I am perswaded by any example in Europe, but borne no doubt in Scythia, and brought over Caucasus and Mount Taurus. The Sclavonian and Arabian tongs acquaint a great part of

*Asia* and *Affrique* with it; the Moscovite, Polock, Hungarian, German, Italian, French, and Spaniard, use no other harmonie of words. The Irish, Briton, Scot, Dane, Saxon, English, and all the Inhabiters of this Iland, either have hither brought, or here found the same in use' (*Poems and A Defence of Ryne*, ed. A. C. Sprague, 1950, p. 133).

p. 105, l. 2131. *Siege of Rhodes*] This pioneering attempt at opera in England was first produced under the Commonwealth at Rutland House in 1656. In 1663 it was performed and published in two parts (ten acts). In his *Essay of Heroic Plays* (1672) Dryden hails *The Siege of Rhodes* as the 'first light we had of [heroic drama] on the English theatre', adding that in it Davenant introduced 'examples of moral virtue writ in verse, and performed in recitative music' (Watson, I, 157-8).

p. 105, l. 2141. *French . . . in it*] Dryden's claim is largely accurate though Spanish tragedies frequently used assonance rather than strict rhyme.

p. 107, l. 2184. *Tentanda . . . humo*] Virgil, *Georgics*, III, 8-9: ('*temp-tanda . . . possim . . .*'): 'I must venture a theme which will exalt me too from the earth.'

p. 107, l. 2188. *Faithful . . . Shepherd*] See p. 170, above. Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* and Johnson's play are partly rhymed.

p. 107, l. 2197. *Do . . . of them?*] George Sandys (1578-1644) produced a verse *Paraphrase upon the Psalmes* (1636), greatly the superior of the versified psalms of Thomas Sternhold (1500-49) and John Hopkins (d. 1570), but never so popular. (Nichol Smith, in his edn. of the *Essay*, pp. 114-15, says that over 600 edns. of the joint work were printed between 1549 and 1828.) An ironic reference to Sternhold and Hopkins occurs in *Absalom and Achitophel*, II, 402-3:

Poor Slaves in metre, dull and adle-pated,  
Who Rhime below ev'n *David's* Psalmes translated.

About 'the ingenious and learned Sandys', on the other hand, Dryden remarks in his Preface to the *Fables* (1700) that he was 'the best versifier of the former age' (Watson, II, 270).

p. 107, l. 2202. *Est . . . peccat*] Horace, *Epistles*, II, i, 63 ('*Interdum vulgus rectum videt, est ubi peccat*'): 'Where the crowd think they are right, it is there that they are wrong.'

p. 108, l. 2208. *Mustapha*] *The Tragedy of Mustapha, Son of Solyman the Magnificent*, by Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery, was first acted at Lincoln's Inn Fields, April 1665; published 1668. Pepys records having seen the play three times; on the last occasion (4 September 1667) he remarks: '... saw "Mustapha"; which the more I see, the more I like; and is a most admirable poem, and bravely acted.' Dryden dedicated *The Rival Ladies* to Boyle; Howard speaks highly of him in his Preface to *Four New Plays*.

p. 108, l. 2233. *Indignatur . . . Thyestae*] *Ars Poetica*, ll. 90-91 ('indignatur item . . .'): 'For the feast of Thyestes scorns to be told in the language of daily life that is almost appropriate to comedy.'

p. 108, l. 2236. *Effutire . . . versus*] *Ibid.*, l. 231 ('Effutire levis . . .'): 'Tragedy scorns to babble trivial verses.'

p. 109, l. 2239. *Sonnet*] The term is used loosely in the sense of a short poem.

p. 109, l. 2239. *Aristotle . . . above it?*] *Poetics*, xxvi. Tragedy is judged superior because it has all the elements of epic and, in addition, 'it has vividness of impression in reading as well as in representation'; it provides a more intense and concentrated experience; and it makes a more unified impression.

p. 110, l. 2296. *quidlibet audendi*] Horace, *Ars Poetica*, l. 10: 'hazarding anything.'

p. 110, l. 2297. *Musas . . . severiores*] Martial, *Epigrams*, ix, xi, 17: 'to cultivate the stricter Muses.' The quotation was a favourite one with Dryden: he quotes it in the Dedication to *Examem Poeticum*, 1693 (Watson, II, 165) and alludes to it (by quoting the preceding line) in his Dedication to the *Aeneis*, 1697 (Watson, II, 236).

p. 111, l. 2303. *how . . . your sight*] Dryden is here drawing on the traditional significance of the dance as a symbol of order and harmony. Cf. Sir Thomas Elyot, *The Governour* (1531); Sir John Davies, *Orchestra* (c. 1594).

p. 112, l. 2348. *Water Poet's Rhymes*] John Taylor (1578?-1653), waterman on the Thames (hence his assumed title, 'the King's Majesty's Water Poet'), whose output of popular, doggerel verse was remarkable.

Some lines from the opening of one poem, *The Penniles Pilgrimage* (1618) will illustrate the level of his writing:

List lordlings, list, if you have lust to list,  
I write not here a tale of had I wist . . .  
The year of grace, accounted, as I ween,  
One thousand twice three hundred and eighteen,  
And to relate all things in order duly,  
'Twas Tuesday last, the fourteenth day of July . . .

(*Early Prose and Poetical Works*, 1888, p. 19)

Ben Jonson remarked on Taylor's popularity in *Discoveries*: 'if it were put to the question of the Water-rimer's workes, against Spencer's; I doubt not, but they would find more Suffrages' (Herford and Simpson, viii, 582).

p. 112, l. 2353. *Delectus . . . Eloquentiae*] Cicero, *Brutus*, LXXII, 253 ('verborum delectum originem esse eloquentiae'): 'the choice of words is the foundation of eloquence.'

p. 112, l. 2359. *Reserate . . . Laris*] *Hippolytus*, l. 863 ('Reserate clausos . . .').

p. 114, l. 2399. *most acute person*] Sir Robert Howard. Cf. p. 177, above.

p. 114, l. 2415. *Judgment . . . workman*] Cf. Dryden's Preface to *Secret Love* (1668): 'the judgment . . . as a master-builder may determine . . . whether the work be according to the exactness of the model' (Watson, I, 105).

p. 115, l. 2440. *Somerset-Stairs*] A landing-place to the west of the original Somerset House; it disappeared when the building was demolished in 1775.

p. 115, l. 2448. *Piazze*] The Piazza (or Piazzas), in Covent Garden, was a fashionable quarter of the city and a centre of social life. The fascination it held for people of Steele's day is evident from *Spectator* No. 14. (Cf. Byron, *Beppo*, vi:

'For, bating Covent Garden, I can hit on  
No place that's call'd 'Piazza' in Great Britain.')

THE PREFACE TO THE GREAT FAVOURITE, or, the  
DUKE OF LERMA

p. 117, l. 4. *Herringman*] Henry Herringman (d. 1704), the friend and publisher of both Howard and Dryden; he was one of the most important publishers of the day, and his shop (frequently mentioned by Pepys) 'the chief literary lounging place in London' (H. R. Plomer, *A Dictionary of Booksellers and Printers, 1641-67* (1907), p. 96). The title pages of Howard's *Four New Plays* and *Great Favourite*, as well as of Dryden's *Essay*, all carry the words: 'Printed for Henry Herringman, at the Sign of the Anchor on the Lower-Walk of the New-Exchange.' Howard claims that Herringman urged him to publish both the volumes mentioned.

p. 117, l. 14. *continuing . . . towards me*] Howard suffered a great deal of ridicule and abuse. John Evelyn complained that he was 'insufferably boasting' (*Diary*, 16 February 1685) and it was generally assumed (as by Pepys, *Diary*, 8 May 1668) that the character Sir Positive At-All, in Shadwell's *Sullen Lovers* (1668) was modelled on Howard: 'A foolish Knight, that pretends to understand every thing in the world, and will suffer no man to understand any thing in his Company; so foolishly Positive, that he will never be convinced of an Error, though never so grosse' (*Works of Thomas Shadwell*, ed. M. Summers, I, (1927), 14).

p. 117, l. 18. *a Gentleman*] In his 'Elizabethan-Restoration Palimpsest', *Modern Language Review*, xxxv, (1940), 287-319, Alfred Harbage convincingly documents his conjecture that the 'gentleman' was Charles Hart (cf. p. 167., above) who brought to Howard the manuscript of a play, *The Spanish Duke of Lerma*, formerly in the possession of the publisher Humphrey Moseley. Moseley had died in 1661 and Harbage suggests that his widow was probably seizing the opportunity—in an age which abounded with plays adapted from earlier sources—to raise money on her husband's collection of manuscript plays. Harbage further argues that the original adapted by Howard was a play by John Ford; this argument throws interesting light on the remarks in Howard's opening paragraph that some of his contemporaries attributed the play 'to another Author'.

p. 117, l. 19. *King's Company*] One of the two acting companies (the 'Duke's' being the other), the King's was founded by the dramatist

Thomas Killigrew in 1660; he brought it from the Red Bull Theatre to Gibbons's Tennis Court (8 November 1660) and then to the new Bridges Street Royal Theatre (7 May 1663). Among his company were the leading actors, Michael Mohun, Charles Hart, Nicholas Burt, and John Lacy and, among the women, Mrs. Knepp who (with Nell Gwyn) spoke the Prologue to *The Great Favourite* when Pepys saw it, 20 February 1668. Howard was financially involved in the affairs of the company; he provided a quarter of the capital required for building the Royal Theatre. This theatre was destroyed by fire in 1672; ten years later the King's and Duke's companies amalgamated at Drury Lane.

p. 118, l. 34. *as . . . old Play*] The Duke is saved by having obtained a cardinal's hat; he is able to face his accusers with the contemptuous lines:

But now you may discharge your managed witnesses  
That stand prepared against the Duke of Lerma.  
Lerma the Cardinal cannot here be tried.  
Be not so dull, my lords. (v. 11)

The historical facts—'the true story'—accord with the dramatic: the Duke of Lerma (1552–1625) obtained his Cardinal's hat from Pope Paul V in 1618.

p. 118, l. 42. *since . . . Natures*] Howard may be referring to his duties as secretary to the Commissioners of the Treasury.

p. 118, l. 45. *venter*] i.e. venture. The now obsolete form was dying out; though it is found twenty years after Howard's Preface, it had been displaced by the modern form much earlier in some cases.

p. 118, l. 47. *Ubi . . . Triumphos*] Lucan, *Pharsalia*, I, 12 ('*Bella geri placuit, nullos habitura triumphos*'): 'Where no triumphs will be gained.'

p. 118, l. 57. *strict . . . Appetites*] See *Don Quixote*, Pt. II, ch. 47. The allusion is to Sancho Panza's period as governor of the island of Barataria and his encounter with the quack-doctor, Pedro Recio de Agüero (whom Sancho calls 'Mal-Agüero'). Sancho finds himself deprived of food by the doctor's strict rules; he is not allowed to taste it in case it should 'do him harm or be hurtful to his stomach'.

p. 118, l. 59. *Fars*] One of the earliest uses of the term 'farce' as applied to a distinct kind of play. (Sprat also used the term in his *Observations*, 1665. See George Williamson, *op. cit.*, *Modern Philology*, XLIV, 2.)

p. 119, l. 71. *I . . . present Fancy*] Howard may be making a clumsy attempt here to cover his tracks. If Harbage's argument (cf. p. 183., above) is valid, then the truth of the matter was that Howard left some of Ford's blank verse in its original state and rewrote other parts in couplet form.

p. 119, l. 77. *to prove . . . Verse*] See pp. 102-106, above.

p. 120, l. 94. *like*] The copy of *The Great Favourite* in the Pepys Library Magdalene College, Cambridge, contains an errata leaf in which 'like' is changed to 'likes'.

p. 120, l. 102. *shutting*] The errata leaf substitutes 'opening' for 'shutting'. But see Dryden's savagely ironic comment on the original version, pp. 131-32, below.

p. 120, l. 103. *Reserate . . . Laris*] See p. 112, above, where Dryden's addition of an English translation in the 2nd edn. of the *Essay* was presumably intended to expose Howard's blunder here. See also p. 131, below.

p. 120, l. 105. *Dictates*] i.e. authoritative pronouncements.

p. 120, l. 108. *so loftily*] Howard's errata leaf instructs at this point: 'for so r[e]ad]. As, to make the Sense entire, as I intended it; which was, *That the shutting of a door should be as loftily exprest by the Author there mentioned, as he fanci'd the opening a door was by Seneca.*'

p. 121, l. 151. *than*] The errata leaf corrects: 'for *than*, r[e]ad]. *then.*'

p. 122, l. 176. *It . . . attempt*] See p. 29, above.

p. 122, l. 183. *ingenuous*] i.e. generous, high-minded.

p. 123, l. 194. *her. Fancy,*] The full-stop is introduced here on the authority of the list of errata; it was lacking in the original.

#### A DEFENCE of an ESSAY of DRAMATIQUE POESIE

p. 125, l. 1. *The . . . care*] *The Indian Emperour* was first performed at the Royal Theatre in 1665; it was not published until October 1667. (Its Epistle Dedicatory is dated 12 October; Pepys bought a copy on 28

October.) The 2nd edn., 1668, contains the *Defence*; this was omitted from all later edns. in Dryden's lifetime.

p. 125, l. 12. *Impression*] i.e. the new edn. of *The Indian Emperour*.

p. 126, l. 29. *take the Glove*] i.e. accept the challenge.

p. 126, l. 32. *Infant . . . King*] The hereditary title of 'King's Champion' belongs to the Dymoke family as lords of the manor of Scrivelsby, Lincs. The champion's functions—dating back at least to Richard II's coronation—were largely confined to performing certain ceremonial duties at the sovereign's coronation.

p. 126, l. 36. *especially . . . things*] An ironic reference to Howard's reputation as a boaster: 'Sir Positive At-all.' See p. 183., above.

p. 126, l. 37. *and . . . Sciences*] The remark was made of the Emperor Hadrian by the philosopher Favorinus; it is recorded by Spartianus, *Vita Hadriani*, 15. (When Dryden repeats the remark in the Preface to *All for Love* he accurately quotes Spartianus's reference to 'thirty legions' (Watson, 1, 227).) John Evelyn later described Howard as 'a gentleman pretending to all manner of arts and sciences' (*Diary*, 16 February 1685).

p. 126, l. 45. *first twenty lines*] i.e. Howard's opening paragraph.

p. 126, l. 55. *distributive Justice*] One of the two divisions of Justice according to Aristotle (the other being Commutative); it concerns the distribution of something in shares appropriate to the deserts of every contestant.

p. 127, l. 66. *for . . . others*] Though Dryden had borrowed heavily from Corneille and perhaps from Sprat, 'for the most part' where the matter was not traditional it was his own. His mock-modesty is principally designed to give ironic pungency to the statement which follows. He obviously knew Howard's play was an adaptation.

p. 127, l. 73. *I . . . represents*] See p. 119, above.

p. 127, l. 86. *since . . . in Verse*] By not distinguishing rhymed from blank verse Dryden makes both his own task and the misrepresentation of Howard the easier.

p. 127, l. 92. *what . . . Question*] See p. 120, above.

p. 128, l. 102. *I am . . . delights*] For Aristotle the end of art is 'delight', but Sidney, like Horace and most Renaissance critics, had stressed its function of delighting in order 'to move men to take that goodness in hand, which without delight they would fly as from a stranger' (Sidney, *Apology*, ed. Needham, p. 11).

p. 128, l. 105. *'Tis . . . work*] Cf. Aristotle, *Poetics*, I, 2; IV, 1-5.

p. 128, l. 107. *admiration*] See p. 161., above.

p. 128, l. 113. *a Play . . . spoken*] See p. 119, above.

p. 129, l. 132. *Ut . . . relinquat*] *Ars Poetica*, ll. 361-4, 149-50: 'As for a painting so with a poem . . . one likes the shade, another prefers to be seen in the light, and does not dread the critic's sharp judgment.' 'And what [the poet] fears he cannot make attractive by his skill, he abandons.'

p. 129, l. 147. *Lazar*] i.e. a leper, though here Dryden may intend a leper-house and thus a reference to Bartholomew's Hospital. Ker observes that 'lazar' is a term often used by Dryden and always with reference to painting. Cf. Preface to *Annus Mirabilis* (Watson, I, 101); Preface to *Tyrannic Love* (Watson, I, 140).

p. 129, l. 149. *ascends to verse*] i.e. rhymed verse.

p. 130, l. 172. *succeeded Verse*] i.e. blank verse.

p. 130, l. 183. *I . . . Comedy*] *The Wild Gallant: A Comedy* was nevertheless published in 1669, the year after the *Defence*; it had been first acted on 5 February 1663. Dryden's medium in this (unsuccessful) play was prose, though, in the Preface, he speaks of the play as his 'first attempt . . . in dramatic poetry' (Watson, I, 131).

p. 130, l. 185. *My . . . reparties*] Johnson, *Life of Dryden*, remarks: 'Congreve [whose description of Dryden Johnson has quoted] represents him as ready to advise and instruct; but there is reason to believe that his communication was rather useful than entertaining. He declares of himself that he was saturnine, and not one of those whose sprightly sayings diverted company; and one of his censors makes him say,

Nor wine nor love could ever see me gay;

To writing bred, I knew not what to say.

. . . Of Dryden's sluggishness in conversation it is vain to search or to

guess the cause . . . yet we must be content to believe what an enemy says of him, when he likewise says it of himself.'

p. 131, l. 201. *Reserate . . . Laris*] See p. 112 and n., p. 120 and n., above.

p. 131, l. 210. *Delectus . . . Eloquentia*] See p. 112 and n., above.

p. 131, l. 219. *for . . . fault*] See p. 120, l. 108. and n., above.

p. 132, l. 226. *Barach . . . curse*] In Hebrew the word means 'bless' with the antithetical meaning of 'curse', i.e. when the blessing is excessive it becomes a curse.

p. 133, l. 279. *Well . . . Statesman*] See p. 118, l. 42 and n., above. Another ironic thrust because the extent of Howard's 'statesmanship' by 1668 was as M.P. for Stockbridge, Hants, and his treasury-secretaryship. As Watson remarks, the final antithesis is Aristotelian; Dryden makes use of it later in the Preface to *Examen Poeticum*: 'The corruption of a poet is the generation of a critic' (Watson, II, 157).

p. 133, l. 283. *ubi . . . triumphos*] See p. 118, l. 47 and n., above.

p. 134, l. 314. *Satyr*] Cf. Dryden's *Discourse concerning . . . Satire*: 'In the criticism of spelling, it ought to be with *i* and not with *y*, to distinguish its true derivation from *satura*, not from *satyrus*' (Watson, II, 116).

p. 134, l. 316. *he . . . upon her*] See p. 123, l. 192, above.

p. 134, l. 321. *Lord L.*] Malone supposed that Dryden's reference is to John Maitland (1616-82), second Earl and first Duke of Lauderdale. Maitland was not raised to the dukedom until 1672, so the designation 'Lord' is appropriate. He was famous, as well as for political skill, for his debauchery. The editor of his papers, referring to the period 1667-73, remarks that Lauderdale was 'no longer the "good Maitland", the "gracious youth" . . . but rather . . . such as we see him in Lely's well-known portrait, the type of all that was coarsest and most brutal among the men of Charles's Court' (ed. O. Airy, *The Lauderdale Papers, 1667-73*, Camden Society, N.S., 1885, p. xxi).

p. 135, l. 345. *That . . . well*] See p. 119, l. 65, above.

p. 136, l. 358. *Ficta . . . veris*] Horace, *Ars Poetica*, l. 338: 'Fictions meant to please should be close to the truth.'

p. 136, l. 367. *Berkenhead*] Sir John Berkenhead (1616-79) was elected a

probation-fellow of All Souls' College in 1640; he edited (1642-5) the Royalist weekly journal, *Mercurius Aulicus*; he became a member of the Royal Society and may have formed a connexion with Dryden in that way. Dryden is quoting from Berkenhead's poem *In Memory of Mr. Cartwright*, which appeared in a posthumous volume of Cartwright's *Comedies, Tragi-Comedies with other Poems* (published by Humphrey Moseley, 1651): Cartwright

Knew the right mark of things, saw how to choose,  
(For the great Wit's great work is to *Refuse*).

p. 136, l. 374. *And . . . built*] See p. 120, l. 121, above.

p. 136, l. 387. *Στῆ . . . &c.*] *Iliad*, VIII, 267.

p. 137, l. 391. *But . . . Particulars*] See p. 120, l. 121, above.

p. 137, l. 402. *my . . . Play*] Dryden claims as his own the definition of a play originally put forward by Lisideius. See p. 43, above.

p. 138, l. 428. *First . . . presents*] See p. 121, above.

p. 138, l. 449. *Inquisitions . . . Society*] Dryden had been elected to the Society in 1662; he served on two of its committees, one of them 'for improving the English language'; he failed to pay his dues and left the Society in 1666. (See C. Lloyd, 'John Dryden and the Royal Society', *P.M.L.A.*, XLV (1930), 967-76; replies to this article (*P.M.L.A.*, XLVI (1931), 951-62) give evidence of the poet's continuing interests in the Society's activities.) The term 'inquisitions' means investigations which, Dryden would have us believe, like his *Essay* are designed to establish truth.

p. 138, l. 450. *Essay*] Dryden is exploiting the ambiguity in the current usage of the word as 'an endeavour' (or perhaps 'an experiment') or as the descriptive title of a literary composition (which Johnson defined as 'an irregular undigested piece').

p. 139, l. 457. *'Tis . . . reasonable*] See p. 33, above. (Note that Dryden omits the misquotation from Tacitus in the passage to which he refers.)

p. 139, l. 471. *Compurgator*] A witness who clears an accused person of a charge by vindicating his character.

p. 139, l. 474. *positive . . . person*] An ironic thrust at 'Sir Positive At-all'. See p. 183.

p. 140, l. 490. *That . . . degree*] See p. 121, l. 146, above.

p. 140, l. 499. *in . . . abbreviate*] A pointed jibe at Howard who (p. 121, above) laments the reluctance of poets 'to abbreviate, or endure to hear their Reasons reduc'd into one strict definition', yet in his own theorizing is prolix and imprecise.

p. 140, l. 503. *professing . . . Poet*] A further riposte to Howard's lumbering irony on the fact that it is outside the scope of a poet to 'argue well'. See pp. 118-119, above.

p. 140, l. 509. *minor Proposition*] A syllogism (such as Dryden has just framed) contains a major and a minor proposition, and a conclusion.

p. 141, l. 522. *Herculean*] In addition to the surface meaning ('overwhelming') which is ironically used, Dryden may intend to make ironic play with the quality he attributed to Howard in his poem, *To my Honored Friend, Sr Robert Howard* (1660):

'Tis your strong Genius then which does not feel  
Those weights would make a weaker spirit reel:  
To carry weight and run so lightly too  
Is what alone your *Pegasus* can do.  
Great *Hercules* himself could ne're do more  
Than not to feel those Heav'ns and gods he bore.

p. 141, l. 549. *chocqu'd*] The prevalent seventeenth-century spelling (from French *choquer*) for the modern 'shocked'.

p. 142, l. 575. *If . . . follows*] *Catiline*, v, i, and v, v, are set in Etruria, with the scenes separating and following them being set in Rome. Cf. p. 82, l. 1431, above.

p. 144, l. 641. *pag, . . . Essay*] See p. 83, above.

p. 145, l. 669. *as . . . Judgment*] Cf. p. 89, l. 1639 and n., above.

p. 146, l. 711. *But . . . commendations*] e.g. in *To my Honored Friend, Sr Robert Howard*, or in the prefatory matter to *Annus Mirabilis, An account of the ensuing Poem, in a Letter to the Honourable, Sir Robert Howard* (1667).

p. 147, l. 726. *and if . . . Opponent*] Dryden was as good as his word; the public dispute with Howard came to an end here and the *Defence* was not reprinted in later editions of *The Indian Emperour* during Dryden's lifetime.

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